

**The Formation and Development of Chinese
Political Theory
1935-1955**

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Abstract

The focus of this work is on the formation and the development of the principles underlying contemporary Chinese political theory. The concern is with the definition of the categorical framework explaining the meaning of the adaptation of Marxism to China, and with the effect of these categories on the structure of the concepts of theory. Thus, this is a study of the ground of the condition of reason, and of the expression of this ground in the activity of thought.

This is brought out through an analysis of the dominant theoretical controversies of the two periods in which the philosophical principles of Chinese Marxism were first posited, and then established: 1935-1940 and 1949-1955. These two eras are linked by the publication in 1952 of "On Contradiction," which was the culmination of the attempt to define the categories governing this political thought.

It is the argument of this study that "On Contradiction" was Mao's philosophical declaration of China's Marxist independence. And that in the early 1950s, this was recognized and understood by leading Party intellectuals, who, in turn, realized the postulates of theory by denying the applicability of a Soviet model for China.

This principle of a Marxist identity through opposition was informed, in part, by the contributions of Party theorists in Shanghai and Beijing, in the mid- to late 1930s. Therefore, through an analysis of the dialectic of formulation, of that which was both preserved and cancelled in the statement of intention, the character of this Marxism is made clear.

In conclusion, it is shown that, that the codification of principle which arranged meaning for theory has continuously represented the interests of the state. Reason has been defined instrumentally, as a philosophy of and for national construction.

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The discourse then turned upon the nature of dialectics. "They are, in fact," said Hegel, "nothing more than the regulated, methodically cultivated spirit of contradiction which is innate in all men, and which shows itself great as a talent in the distinction between true and false."

"Let us only hope," interposed Goethe, "that these intellectual arts and dexterities are not frequently misused, and employed to make the false true and the true false."

(Conversations with Eckermann)

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental ideas of political philosophy are almost always enclosed within their own history. It is this sense of historical relativism that they maintain throughout time. And thus questions which seem timeless are actually defined by the moments of perspective. A contemporary moral philosophy, for example, which seeks a shared understanding with Aristotelian conceptions of the good, presumes the prior recognition that Aristotle's ethics were tied to the polis and not to the modern state.¹

This in turn suggests that attempts at recollection rarely aim at restoration. Instead, they usually have as their intention theoretical conversation. The incorporation of an identity of interests within an awareness of difference most often aims simply at the creation of a dialogue. And it through such means that stance is clarified and made secure.²

This clarification which occurs through dialogue need not be found through antithesis. Though separated by time philosophies of the good may in fact share a substantive basis. And this is because, in part, reason is not assumed to be the subject of another assertive purpose. Instead, concepts are in a sense accidental, contingent and individual.³ And as knowledge is not part of an absolute program, ideas retain a freedom of movement.

There are no such liberties in Marxism. Here, the meaning of an idea is inseparable from the social and political context from which it arose. It is this derivation, this tracing of the intellectual product back to the condition of its production that determines value. And this is because Marxist judgment represents; it acts as the agent of an historical telos. For history is to be understood dialectically as a materialist process of development; a continuum of successive stages of social and political-economic formation driven by the productivity of man. And it is this assumption of an ontology of labor which guides the Marxist project.

The fundamental principle in this ideology is that men must labor to satisfy their needs, but that they do so in a particular fashion. In contrast to all other species beings who rely upon instinct, men plan their actions. But historically, Marxists argue, this teleological essence has been universally denied. Instead of expressing a general will, civic direction has always been the prerogative of an élite. And therefore for Marxists, the transcendence of all those exploitive forms which prohibit the development of human capability becomes an imperative. The demand of history turns into the duty to realize essence: to create that condition when all may fully and creatively realize their nature as laboring beings.

Thus every historical moment is to be understood in terms of the process of production: the manner in which men organize themselves, and the way in which they utilize and develop the means of labor. And it is through these constituent determinations that consciousness is able to recognize and order its own situation. This is because the forms of work are said to reveal the underlying set of principles which govern the course of human conduct. In turn, these categories of understanding are assumed to be generally applicable, and become more specific only as economic formations become more complex. Thus, for example, while the mechanisms of capitalism are distinguished by such laws as the tendential fall in the rate of profit, and the labor theory of value, all phenomena are said to comprise a unity of opposites, and all change is said to occur through the mutual transformation of quantity and quality. The point is simply that these so-called laws represent, and are supposedly embodied, in human agency. An agency which is historically determined, but which men must act out in order to fulfill. This truth is the foundation for this particular world-view, which presumes the role of philosophical science, and thereby assigns all phenomena a place.

This sense of location applies both to the present and the past. For the past is seen as a series of moments, of negations of negations, preparing the way for a future of affirmation. And it is this sequence to history that makes it clear why

previous forms of knowledge have no meaningful place within the Marxist corpus. This is because their truths are inextricably bound with moments which have been surpassed. Ideas are not simply limited to, derived from a particular circumstance; thoughts are instead so segmented within their moments that they are in effect to be buried with them. At best, a philosophy may express a partial truth. But the exploitive nature of each moment--and all non-socialist systems are declared to be exploitive--prevents any understanding from being more than just limited. "The brilliancy of Aristotle's genius," Marx says,

is shown by this alone, that he discovered, in the expression of the value of commodities, a relation of equality. The peculiar conditions of the society in which he lived, alone prevented him from discovering what "in truth," was at the bottom of this equality.⁴

A thought of course may attempt to transcend its moment as an anticipatory promise, but in Marxism this is rejected as utopian: an idealized present projected as the future. The "dreams of a shop-girl,"⁵ as Marx said of Fourier. For Marx there was just the truth of the practical work toward socialism. And work is

damned serious and demands the greatest effort. The labor concerned with material production can only have this character if (1) it is of a social nature, (2) it has a scientific character and at the same time is general work, i.e., if it ceases to be human effort as a definite, trained natural force, gives up its purely natural, primitive aspects and becomes the activity of a subject controlling all the forces of nature in the production project.⁶

Thus, Marxism is that which offers a condition and an imperative: it explains how men have behaved and how they should. In this it explains both the history of the forms of reason and the reason of history. And this it does through a complex set of categories and laws which both reveal and guide the determinations of all (pre-socialist) moments. In short, it is a science of and for historical passage; a specific form of materialist logic which presumes an essential responsibility.

This Weltanschauung is what was adapted in China. A set of concepts and categories which classified thought in terms of economies of production. But though it provided the criteria for the disposition of knowledge, this prior analytic was not all inclusive. There was that within it which remained, in this sense, indeterminate. And this was because the meaning of this tradition changed with the addition of Leninism.

The effect of the Russian Revolution and the rise of Leninism was to alter the meaning of some of the previous suppositions, so that Marxism now seemed to require a specific national embodiment: a novel form of synthesis. The proof of Leninism: the fact that a socialist revolution could occur in one state and under primitive economic conditions, meant that Marxism suddenly acquired an aspect of particularity. There were now doctrines whose precepts both arose from and gave license to a uniqueness to circumstance. This national identity was of course still prescribed; the truth of specificity could only be recognized with reference to a transcendent set of maxims. But what Leninism did was to broaden the subject of imperative as it allowed for a national expression of Marxism. At the same time Leninism added to the overriding idea of objective necessity by declaring the Party as the form through which essence was to be realized. It was the Party which was to define and lead the tasks of social construction. But this formal and objective determination still left open an area for individual choice. That which Leninism both justified and organized: the means to achieve a 'socialism in one country', also created the possibilities for a variety of particular theories of practice.

But this assumption of an aspect of self-determination was not clearly defined. Indeed, as applied to countries other than the Soviet Union, this premise remained basically unstated. And this was because the Soviet leadership tried continuously to appropriate all claims to truth from its declared position as the vanguard of the Socialist Revolution. In this, the idea of a 'socialism in one country', was both preserved and 'lifted-up': that which was contingent on

circumstance in the Soviet Union came to be included within the imperatives of Marxism-Leninism. And thus, through the incorporation of its policies within this higher identity, the Soviet leadership was able to proclaim new laws and principles.

This identity between the singular and the universal could not of course be absolute. Irrespective of political desire, the criteria of Marxist principle could not simply be absorbed within the individuality of Soviet practice. There was that which had to remain outside as the subject for specific determinations. In other words, as an ideology of general tenets, Marxism could not simply be turned into a Soviet strategy.

The existence of this substrate meant that there was no maxim of objective necessity which would permit any course of action to be advanced as a constituent category of Marxism. Instead, the condition of particularity suggested, quite strongly, that all individual socialist theory and practice was as an object, constituted of the categories of Marxism. In this, the subject was fixed. At the same time, within these limits, there was no theoretical prohibition to the uniqueness of interpretation. The constancy of Marxist principles which persuaded all philosophical consideration, meant that the kind of creativity which was allowed in the Soviet adaptation of Marxism, was open equally to all socialist revolutions. Synthesis in Marxism was not a mimetic process. Instead, to some degree, it encouraged imaginative thought and action.

The Marxism that was adapted to China was thus a composite of diverse suppositions which needed to be classified as to whether they were necessary or conditional. The categorical imperatives of Marxism had, that is, to be distinguished from those constructs which were politically instructive, but could not command. In this, meaning assumed a national form. The very idea of synthesis signified that expression was to be mediated by the particularity of circumstance. And therefore, as consciousness sought to understand an adaptive set of tenets, so

was it guided by a desire to find them suitable. Here, the requirement of relevancy was true not only initially, where Marxism had to act as a force for persuasion, but it was also true as a constant principle, as that which had to be maintained throughout the whole labor toward socialism. The affirmation of telos in this 'un-orthodox' setting meant that the reason of theory had continuously to apply to the practice that had been declared in its name.

And in China this was the task for Party political philosophers and for Party theorists of the political economy, It was their responsibility to codify presumption, and to help formulate the method for the achievement of socialism. Hence, statements on procedure were also statements upon the meaning of synthesis. It was not only that every interpretation necessarily revealed an understanding as to the basis of stance; it was also that the manner in which an (important) argument was received politically, whether, for example, it did or did not affect policy, or whether it could, gave expression to the character of this Marxism.

It follows, therefore, that an analysis of the contrasting interpretations and arguments of Party political philosophers and Party theorists of the political economy, should help to explain the meaning of this Chinese Marxism. And that an explanation as to the role and function of theory will make clear both the motivation and presumption inherent within its fundamental principles.

This is the focus for this work: the reason of praxis and the practice of reason; the essence and appearance of theory. The concern is with the ground of theory, and with the condition of that ground, the grid upon which specific theories of practice were articulated. Thus, the idea of influence extends beyond--though it does not slight--the question as to the relationship between theory and a particular practice. For of most concern is that which was always present: the ground which structured the forms of knowledge.

In effect, the focus is on two kinds of necessity: on that necessity which constituted the framework, the principles of theory, and on that necessity which

comprised a particular argument. But this must not mislead, since theory could never be pure, abstracted from its political reality. On the contrary, theory was always in a sense immediate and public, in that all philosophical reflections were expressed through the mediums of the Party. It was the Party which entered directly into the formation of discourse and mediated the definition of imperative. And thus authority became integral to the tenets of theory as both means and as an idea.⁷ As means, this was signified by the fact that all discussion, debate and analysis took place within its strictures and organizations. Rules were Party rules. At the same time, since the Party was accepted as that institution which should lead the course of construction, theory was guided by an assumption of value. Thought had to incorporate the realpolitik of a political order, as a normative basis.

This is not to suggest, however, that the full character of theoretical inquiry in China could be defined through adherence to Leninist organizational principles. For even if it were stated beforehand that theory was reactive, was dependent upon a prior policy articulation, the content of this reaction would still be open to a variety of interpretations. To assume otherwise not only turns a proposition into a maxim, it also ignores the fact that Party announcements could be general and ambiguous, allowing for--if not directly encouraging--a relative freedom for Party thought.

This claim, however abstract, of an intellectual ground for theory nevertheless requires a more definite sense of location, since the meaning and function of Marxist thought in China has been somewhat discontinuous over time. This is most obvious and dramatic with respect to the nature of concerns both before and after the seizure of power. The focus of theoretical responsibility clearly changed once an idea became in part, real. There was, of course, a sense of continuity insofar as theorists determined that their role was to educate and to popularize a new philosophy, that it was to support and to legitimize the Communist Party, and the ideas that it was said to represent. But what clearly had altered was the substance of conceptual concern. Issues were now centered upon questions of

political consolidation and economic construction. Yet, at the same time, the approach to formulation, to understanding, had to have precedence. And this was so because the essence of this Marxism lay as much in its method: dialectical materialism, as it did in providing political notions for power.

This dialectic was supposedly the expression of the truth both of nature and of human society. It was that which unveiled human history as a sequence of political and economic exploitation, and, in this, appeared to demand an alternative social vision. But this in turn seemed to suggest that the very condition of Chinese Marxism was grounded in an untenable state of antinomy. For, in theory, at least, the essence of the dialectic lay in negation, in critically unfolding the complexity of a moment in order to reveal the truth of power. From its stance as the value of reason, and through denial, the dialectic posited true consciousness, presumed social and political rights, as it continuously gainsaid the pre-socialist order of things. In this preservation of intention through cancellation, the dialectic comes to signify movement, the process of revolution.

There is clearly a question then as to how this kind of critical methodology could be reconciled to the affirmative needs of an economically underdeveloped socialist state. The requirements of stability and legitimacy were seemingly contradicted by a philosophy which kept declarations of assertion in reserve. Unless, of course, the dialectic was given another definition; or that there were other definitions, all acceptably Marxist. This, however, demands concretion.

Thus far, this has been about an idea of an idea: a theoretical consideration as to how to approach a political theory. The attempt has been to frame the constellation, the referential matrix--intellectual and political--which apparently constituted this philosophy. But here, as a propaedeutic of sorts, the concern has not been to insist, rather it has been to suggest a sense of conceptual accountability; a proposition as to what these constructs would seemingly have to incorporate in an embodiment as a Marxist political theory.

In this regard, inference does suppose an historical location. The discursive ground of categories and constructs needs to be, as it were, mapped out. And here, as has already been noted, the rooting of a political axis acts as a truly meaningful signpost in that, as a (the) source for theoretical intention, it always provided, in reception, a statement upon legitimacy.

Understood in its broadest sense, elite political judgment was, in one constant respect, a comment upon the status of reason. At any moment, a theoretical exposition revealed beyond itself the rules, the political arrangement for meaning. And thus, the calculus of account, the subject of the modes of thought has in effect to be extended to include or to be seen more fully as itself the subject of accountability; as the demonstration of political responsibility and order. But when, specifically?

In order to set out the purpose (intended and otherwise) and the ground of this Marxist thought, and in light of the previous discussion as to the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity, it is both logical and necessary to compare and contrast the two periods: 1935-1940 and 1949-1955, that were critical for its formation and development.

These were the two moments of theoretical ascension: the former, the crystallization of an idea of adaptation, the latter, the codification of this very principle. What connects them is the process of classification, the structuring of the ideological statement of sinification into an epistemology. As an historical movement, this process found its embodiment in an object, in the document of Chinese Marxist philosophy--"On Contradiction," which itself claimed to represent the determination of practice, through affirmative negation.⁸ For, it was this essay which lifted Chinese Marxist reason out of its generality as a condition of national ought into its realization as necessity incarnate; as particular because required.

Officially, however, this document is dated as having been written in 1938. But this insistence upon a continuity of purpose misleads. For in 1938, Mao's

philosophical argument denied the very idea of a sinification of Marxism. At that time, his theoretical reflections betrayed his political intention. Therefore, the idea of sinification that "On Contradiction" came to define, must be seen as the product of an intellectual environment, a general moment rich in differing propositions and controversies. And thus to look back, or to begin with these inferences of thought, is both to understand the basis of principle and the dialectic of formulation. It is to see the territory of theory in the consciousness of setting; the vicissitudes of its theory of practice in its theories of praxis.

The following is an account of the definition and role of political theory in two of the most formative periods of Chinese Marxism. Thus, and for reasons already discussed, it is in two parts. The first is centered upon the debates concerning the attempt to provide a meaning, a context for the Sinification of Marxism; while the second focuses upon the philosophical turn of this supposition into categorical law, and its consequent effect upon theoretical argument. The division is not chronological but occurs with the publication of "On Contradiction," and the subsequent controversies surrounding the initial stage of socialist transition. The reasons for this will become clear, though they have already been suggested. And thus the first part begins with the theoretical disputes in Shanghai and Beijing in the mid-1930s, and ends with the close of "New Democracy."

Finally, a note of qualification; a setting, as it were, of the parameters. This charting of the landscape of categories and concepts has no pretence to exhaustion; it does not include all that was written or discussed during these two periods. Analysis, instead, focuses upon those arguments, hypotheses, and contentions which either contributed directly toward the formulation of synthesis--Sinification--or which later, were clearly illustrative of a specific attitude and pattern of thought. This rigorous narrowing of approach details the nodal points of reason, thereby allowing the expression of an idea truly to be grasped as it unfolds.

Notes

- 1 The critical importance of the polis as that which provides the condition for the proper development for character through education and habituation is made clear in the Nicomachean Ethics, Book X, Chapter 9. It may also be noted, in passing, that Aristotle believed that his philosophy would only find completion through time, and supposed the work of others. Nicomachean Ethics (1908a20). The translation used here is that of W. D. Ross and J. O. Urmson, J. Barnes (ed.), Complete Works of Aristotle Revised Translation, Vol. 2, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- 2 The idea of a dialogical process to understanding has been influenced by the argument of Hans-Georg Gadamer in Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus, Robert M. Wallace, trans., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
- 3 The importance of the accidental, as that which protects the character of the individual from absorption within absolutist programs, has been argued by Odo Marquard in In Defense of the Accidental: Philosophical Studies, Oxford: Oxford University Press Odéon, 1991. Marquard's thesis goes much further than the point developed here, but it is interesting to note, particularly with regard to the discussion of Marxism that is to follow.
- 4 Karl Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 60; Karl Marx, Capital, Fredrick Engels (ed.), New York: International Publishers, 1967.
- 5 Karl Marx, Selected Writings, David McLellan (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 368.
- 6 Ibid., p. 368.
- 7 The interrelationship and interdependence between power and knowledge has been discussed and developed by Michel Foucault. See, for example Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977, Colin Gordon (ed.), London: Harvester, 1980, and Michel Foucault, Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and other Writings, Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.), New York: Routledge, 1988.
- 8 The concept of an affirmative negation refers to the idea that contradictions may be codified in such a way that they reinforce and legitimize an existing state of affairs. In this 'positive' function, negation would represent an idea, that would be denied in essence by the more immediate needs of the state.

PART I
STATEMENTS OF INTENTION

CHAPTER 1

THE CONCEPT OF THE DIALECTIC: THEORIES OF MARXISM

It is perhaps only in the unity of primary concerns that the particularity of Marxist definitions is most clearly revealed. For in the development of interpretation, analyses share a common basis in regard to the fundamental question as to the relationship between Hegel's conception and use of the dialectic and that of Marx. In China, this problem, that which Marx posed in the Manuscripts when he asked "how do we stand as regards the Hegelian dialectic,"¹ found its specific political expression in the dispute between Ye Qing and Ai Siqu.

Ye Qing, in his article "Commemorating Hegel," and in the introduction to his book on Hegel, argued that there was no qualitative distinction between the function of the dialectic in the theories of Marx and Hegel; that their methodologies, though tied to different conceptual systems, were essentially the same. Indeed, he maintained that Marx had found in Hegel's work the complete method of dialectical materialism. Central to this notion was Ye's belief that it was possible to segregate a method from its theoretical basis within a philosophy, and in turn use it to supersede that philosophy. Marx and Engels, he said,

recognized that we critically use Hegel's method to destroy his form and save his content. His revolutionary aspect was his dialectics, that which Hegel called logic . . . materialism received dialectics [while] naturally stripping it of all its external spirit.²

According to Ye, Hegel's notion of the dialectic was based upon the understanding that all matter contains within itself its own contradiction, and that it was through the self-movement of this internal contradiction that matter evolved. Thus history, both natural and human, progressed within the continuous dialectical

transformation of quantity into quality; or, as Ye also called it, the negation of the negation. In its ability to "explain the phenomenon of nature, society, and thought," the dialectic was for him the "universal formula," "the necessary tool which discovers the central relationship between things and events . . . constituting the highest point in the historical method";³ "the special logic within universal logic."⁴ And it was this idea of a dialectical pattern to movement, that, he argued, Marx took directly from Hegel. "In Hegel, the dialectical movement is reason, in Marx it is matter."⁵

Therefore, as Ye understood it, the dialectic was an independent and invariant law of motion; the cause and effect, as it were, of the linear process of historical development. He saw, for example, the internal logic of capitalism--the qualitative transformation of "commodities into money and then into capital"--as the necessary correspondent to the movement of history from "man's property to capital's property to the future of social property."⁶ What is most important, however, is that underlying this concept of the dialectic was the belief that man's consciousness is a passive reflection of the objective laws of history; and that self-consciousness is revealed in its ability both to understand these laws and to adapt creatively to them. This becomes more clear when it is recognized that Ye was restating a basic conceptual argument of Engels; one that had also been accepted by Lenin, and which had governed subsequent Soviet Marxist discourse. And as it was this inheritance that provided, in part, the precondition for the development of Ye's and Ai's argument, it is important here to sketch, briefly, the lineaments of this tradition.

In Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy Engels argued that the material basis of thought had been established through the inversion of the Hegelian conception that nature and history were a copy of the absolute idea.

Thus dialectics reduced itself to the scheme of the general laws of motion both of the external world and of human thoughts--two sets of laws which are identical in substance, but differ in their

expression in so far as the human mind can apply them consciously while in nature and also up to now for the most part in human history, these laws assert themselves unconsciously . . . thereby the dialectic of concepts itself became merely the conscious reflex of the dialectical motion of the real world and thus the dialectic of Hegel was placed upon its head; or rather turned on its head, on which it was standing, and placed upon its feet.⁷

The difficulty with Engel's conception of the dialectic was that it posited the rise of revolutionary consciousness as an unmediated relation.⁸ The substitution of matter for spirit objectified the dialectic into a determinist telos in which the proletariat became in theory the identical subject and object of history. This clearly seemed to suggest that the reason of history at some historical moment necessarily became manifest in the realization of socialism. Yet, it could also be argued, as Lenin did, that the dialectic of necessity implied only the possibility of supersession, and that it was only through the mediation of a Party that class consciousness could be actualized. In other words, the idealization of a dialectic in nature allowed for its verification as a desirable myth. It was the Party, as Lenin stressed, which became the subject of truth in that it alone grasped the objective dialectic at that critical moment when negation could be realized. Moreover, because the seizure of power could occur before the full development of the laws of capitalism, the Party, in the period of the transition to socialism, had of necessity to continue to guide the proletariat in the long course of self-fulfillment.

Thus, after the Revolution and the victory in the Civil War, Lenin maintained that the task of philosophy was to further the understanding and the use of the dialectic in nature. The source of their methodology was to be Hegel; for their duty was to explain "Hegelian dialectics materialistically."⁹ As Lenin said in 1922 in a letter to the main Soviet philosophical journal "Under the Banner of Marxism":

The group of editors and contributors to the magazine . . . should in my opinion be a kind of "Society of Materialist Friends of Hegelian Dialectics." Modern natural scientists will find (if they know how to seek and if we learn to help them) in the Hegelian dialectics

materialistically interpreted, a series of answers to the philosophical problems that are being raised by the revolution in natural science, making the intelligentsia who admire bourgeois fashion stumble into reaction.¹⁰

The task which Lenin had defined for philosophy reflected his continuous concern to place natural science within an historical materialist philosophy; to prove, as Engels had argued, that in nature "the same dialectical laws of motion force their way through as those which in history govern the apparent fruitlessness of events."¹¹ Here, it is important to remember that developments in the natural sciences, particularly in physics, had led to mechanistic theories (empiro-criticism) which, in arguing that there was no distinction between appearance and reality, and that the world was a complex of sensations where the physical and mental were merely different organized elements of the same experience, had rejected the attempt to define a philosophical conception of matter and a theory of epistemology based upon it. Lenin therefore tried to distinguish the philosophical category of matter from the scientific, and to argue that whereas science was concerned with its physical properties, in philosophy, it was a "category denoting the objective reality which is given to man by his sensations while existing independently of them."¹² It was upon this basis that Lenin strove to deepen the understanding of Engels' theory of knowledge through a study of Hegel.

Throughout the 1920s the dispute against mechanism, and the struggle for an alliance between natural science and dialectical materialism, was carried on by Abram Deborin and his followers. Deborin believed that the fundamental virtue of the dialectic was that it provided an immutable methodology to guide and to explain the facts of empirical investigation. Basing himself upon Hegel, he argued that a scientific fact could only be understood within the context of a philosophical concept. As a Deborinite stressed,

to express oneself in Hegel's language, the subject of dialectical materialism is the most general determinations of being: matter, quality, quantity, measure, causality, subject-object etc. All the

concepts we have indicated are applicable in equal degree both to natural and to social science, but at the same time they do not merge with either one.¹³

In the emphasis upon the independent quality of particular natural phenomena, Deborin felt that he had not only responded to the mechanist notion of monism, but at the same time had established the primacy of dialectical materialism. In 1931, however, Deborin was attacked by Mitin (an erstwhile disciple) for creating a metaphysical system--in that in Deborin's stress upon the dialectic as a theoretical method, he had divorced it from practice. He was further criticized for underestimating Lenin, and for overestimating Plekhanov; for Deborin believed that since conscious matter was also organic matter, and since living matter was, as it were, matter, the unity of subject and object would eventually be achieved through conciliation rather than struggle. (This was of course what Plekhanov had argued in his theory of the evolutionary growth to socialism.) For these sins Deborin was labeled a Menshevik Idealist, and with his followers, branded as having laid the basis for left deviation-mechanism being understood as right deviation. In the future, according to Mitin, the value of a philosophical work in the Soviet Union would be decided by the Central Committee, "under the leadership of our dear and beloved teacher, Comrade Stalin."¹⁴

What it is important to note is that by 1931 the philosophical texts of Engels and Lenin had become sanctified within the Soviet Union. Engels' three fundamental laws of dialectical materialism: the mutual transformation of quantity and quality, the law of the unity of opposites, and the law of the negation of the negation, were canonized categories which structured theoretical argument. This was true not only in the Soviet Union, but also in China, for no Chinese Marxist could openly attack either Engels or Lenin. And it is within this context that Ai Siqu's criticism of Ye Qing must be seen; for in this controversy Ai was forced to come to terms with that philosophical tradition with which Ye had allied himself.

In the article, "On the Theory of the Reversal of Hegel," Ai begins his analysis of accusing Ye of having adopted Deborin's position in separating Hegel's method from its theory. Instead, he says, this philosophic relation must be seen dialectically, as the unity of contradictions. The role of the dialectic as idealist reason is determined and structured by its conceptual idealist system. Therefore, Ai says, though there is a dialectic between a method and its tenets, and though in Hegel's philosophy there are elements of materialism in both its expression and its basis, "one cannot treat the potential of negation as having been realized."¹⁵

In the Phenomenology of Mind, for example, where Hegel explained the theory of knowledge, there is already the important declaration that knowledge cannot be separated from practice; [and] in his Philosophy of History, Hegel had realized the determining significance of the production of tools in human society. These constituent parts [of materialism] however, are still suppressed by an idealist system.¹⁶

Thus, Ai argues that a materialist supersession of this philosophy presupposes a different conceptual framework; for an attempt to transform the constellation of materialist principles and complexes, implicit and explicit, through Hegel's categories themselves will necessarily result in the abstraction of dialectical movement as reason or matter.

According to Ai the logic of materialist dialectics was reflected in the law of the mutual transformation of quantity and quality. This, in turn, was to be understood not as "the movement of reason, but as the movement of existence itself, such that it becomes the highest stage of consciousness."¹⁷ And it was upon this basis that he criticizes Ye's economic theories. Ye, he says, conceives of the idea of negation mechanically; he does not recognize the function of the law of transformation.

In capitalism the change from commodities into currency and from currency into the re-production of capital, is a qualitative process which has as its prerequisite a qualitative development. Within the three stages of this process, change does not occur through empty logic but is realized through the law of transformation . . . to group

only the logical movement of negation is to return to the grave of Hegel.¹⁸

This emphasis upon the historical concretization of the laws of transformation, as necessity mediated and revealed by man, was derived from Ai's understanding of the antinomic character of the Hegelian dialectic. What Ai believed was that despite its idealism, Hegel's concept of the dialectic offered, in part, a method for the analysis of the objective forms of society, because this dialectic was grounded in the historical process itself, in the dynamic relationship between man and nature. This is the significance of Ai's quote as to the "determining significance of the tool," as that which is necessarily produced as men produce their own history. For, it helps to recall that there were two different levels of alienation in Hegelian philosophy: the first was the alienation of man from the World Spirit; the second was the alienation of man from nature, and it was in the non-identity of this relationship, the dialectic between subject and object, that human history was created. It was this materialist premise to Hegel's philosophy which Ai understood to be that which Marx had critically transformed. This is made clear in Ai's essay, "Human Subjectivity as Seen by the New Philosophy," where he explains the meaning of the dialectic between man and nature.

Here, Ai states that what is fundamental to man is that he is an objective natural being; the objects of his essential needs exist outside of himself. Unlike other natural beings, however, the objects of nature do not immediately present themselves in such a way as to satisfy human needs; thus through labor man mediates his relationship with nature. It is through teleological projection, and the creation of the means to realize it, that man fulfills his biological needs in a human way. "That which is called historical movement," Ai writes,

has as its fundamental essence the life-activity of material production, it is what Marx in the Theses on Feuerbach called "sensuous human activity, practice." [Man] under social conditions, through labour towards an object transforms that object to appropriate it; this is what is called historical activity.¹⁹

The concept of labor as the essence of man is one which Marx argued not only in the Theses on Feuerbach, but also in the Grundrisse and in Capital. Yet it was perhaps most plainly expressed in the Manuscripts, particularly in Marx's well-known statement on Hegel's Phenomenology.

The outstanding achievement of Hegel's Phenomenology . . . is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of labour and comprehends objective man--true, because real man--as the outcome of man's own labour.²⁰

Despite the fact that the Manuscripts had yet to be translated into Chinese when Ai published this article in 1934, and that this early work of Marx had only been published two years before, it is clear that from his readings of Marx and Hegel, Ai had grasped a critical philosophical aspect of dialectical materialism as the young Marx had defined it. Moreover, the notion of labor as the fundamental mediation, as that which makes man a specific natural being, is one which Ai repeatedly stressed. In the article "Do Animals Possess Instincts?," for example, he points out that while animals are purely instinctual, limited to the use of their physiological organs to satisfy their needs, "humans transcend their physiological organs to realize their goals, by creating tools and by making use of that which lies outside them."²¹ Human history, he says, is the process of changing the objective world.²²

Here, what is most important is that for Ai, as for Marx, the development of consciousness, which arises through labor, is revealed not as that which reflects an internally determined movement that is maintained irrespective of its initial realization in the activity of intention, but rather as that which determines and is determined by its own dynamic relation with nature. In other words, the growth of individual consciousness, its particular expression in an historical moment as an

exploration of means, does not conceal or make manifest, a dialectic in nature.

"Human subjectivity," Ai says,

possesses a subjective element, its object is human life. Human subjectivity is humanity's cognizance of its own life, its estimation, which results in ideals and desires. All natural phenomena move blindly under fixed laws, but human life has its own particular goal-orientation, has its own desires, will, thoughts and feelings. Every person towards his own life, within a certain internal sphere has the power of choice . . . within certain internal limits, man relies on his own decisions in acting . . . we cannot attribute mechanical causation as in natural phenomena to human subjectivity.²³

"One cannot," he emphasizes, "treat the phenomena of will within human life as identical to the mechanical movement in nature."²⁴

It is through labor therefore that man, recognizing himself "as a species being"²⁵ (Marx) forms with his others human society. Thus, when Ai speaks of an "internal sphere" and of "internal limits," he means by this the restrictions imposed by the circumstances of a given social formation. Consciousness, that is, presupposes a materialist basis, which in turn dialectically determines it. The social mediation, and that between men and nature occurs not in abstraction, but rather within the concrete conditions within which men find themselves. And this is the reason why he stresses the law of transformation, because the process of negation and its realization is determined by a real historical situation. "The subject content to human subjectivity," he notes, "is defined inside historical circumstances, therefore it is limited, its ability is relative."²⁶ (As Marx said, ". . . circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances.")²⁷

It was this conception of the dialectic, as that which must be rooted in history, that Ai saw as Marx's inheritance from Hegel. For it was Hegel who argued,

to comprehend what is, this is the task of philosophy, because what is, is reason. Whatever happens, every individual is a child of his time; so philosophy too is its own time apprehended in thoughts. It is just as absurd to fancy that a philosophy can transcend its

contemporary world as it is to fancy that an individual can overleap his own age, jump over Rhodes.²⁸

Therefore, what Ai emphasizes is that thought must be understood not as the movement of pure logic, but rather as that which expresses and is the expression of a real situation. Hopes and feelings can neither be mechanically determined nor can they 'voluntaristically' be willed into existence. There is, in other words, no absolute reconciliation between subject and object. "That which occurs as a result of human activity often is completely dissimilar from that which is desired," Ai writes, regarding Hegel's Logic. "And though Hegel is an idealist, if one strips the formula of the idealist categories of reason and the absolute, the content of the new philosophy can be seen. For Hegel, unlike all other idealists, does not see the goal as an invariant thing."²⁹

According to Ai, the dialectic as a concept in historical materialism meant in turn that history had to be understood dialectically. A specific historical moment was to be analyzed in terms of the interactions of contradictions: their change into their opposites, their negation, and, at a higher stage, their realization as the negation of the negation. In this, what was basic to the concept of the dialectic was the principle of totality; the idea of the unity of complexes of social determinants, and the necessity of their change. As Ai explained in "On the Theory of Internal and External Necessity," the immanent character of critique lay, "in the grasp of the internal laws of development. It is the essence not the surface that matters; to esteem the appearance is only to understand the beginning steps."³⁰ Since he defined the subject-object dialectic in relation to, in terms of, the various social spheres which comprise the notion of a totality, and as consciousness, at different levels, reflected (dialectically) its moment, he denied any theory that would redefine this consciousness in terms of simple correspondence.

One of his earlier essays, for example, "On Art's Eternal and Political Nature" written in 1933 (but included in a collection published after he joined the

Party in 1935) was directed against a Japanese theorist, Hiroshi Kawaguchi, who, basing himself on Lenin (as Ai notes) had argued that art's enduring value lay not in itself, but rather in its technical ability to reflect a certain truth about objective reality. And Ai responds to this by noting that not only is this historically inaccurate, in that the value of great art has remained constant, irrespective of the discontinuities of history, but that this also reduces art to propaganda, as a "special example to serve a special example."³¹ Instead, he says, the eternal aspect of art must be seen as an inherent quality, as that which, though linked to and shaped by the political sphere, nevertheless derives its value from a unique process of reflection. For, unlike philosophy and science where the general is abstracted from the particular, in art the particular is threaded to the universal. To Ai, this signifies that art is remarkable in that it is unable to exhaust its object. And thus its lasting value is made manifest in its ability to encourage imagination, through the use of concrete example.

The eternal quality in art develops between the suitability of the reader and the work of art. It is not because the work is suited to an eternal humanity; it is because it serves a reader, suited to whatever concrete example, with unlimited possibilities.³²

He emphasizes, however, that "the work of art is not a matter in which reflection is immediate, for it is the task of the reader . . . to explore the social conditions in the concrete example of the work."³³

What is important here is not Ai's theory of aesthetics; rather it is his argument that there is a dialectical relationship between the relatively autonomous complexes--art, science, philosophy, etc.--which are unified within a dynamic and changing totality. For, in this context, the clear suggestion that the relationship between the base and the superstructure was itself dialectical, composed of a multiplicity of interacting contradictions, meant, in turn, that the conception of a subject-object dialectic, and the idea of its reconciliation as revolutionary consciousness--or its reification as 'false consciousness'--needed to be defined not

in terms of pure economic relations, as that which was determined by a specific role in the production process, but in terms of the totality of social practices. In other words, Ai's recognition of the underlying grid framing creativity, implied that an analysis of an historical moment, and the desire for its supersession, had to include within itself a dialectical understanding of the determined determinations of art and politics. And thus in his response to Ye Qing, and in his critique of the fundamental concepts governing Soviet dialectics, he not only begins to develop an alternative stance as to the meaning of Marxism, but in so doing, he also begins, quite subtly, to shift the focus of critical understanding from the base toward the superstructure. This becomes clear in his article "A Criticism of the Theoretical Method of Political Economy," written in 1935, which was an analysis of a Soviet textbook on political economy.

Here, he introduces his argument rather gently (and honestly) by noting that the study of economics usually gives him a headache; and he commends this book as both excellent and painless. He says, however, that it contains three major errors. The first concerns the book's scope; for the authors maintain that the methodology of political economy relates only to the laws of capitalist society, and are thus irrelevant to the functioning of socialist society. To this, Ai says that while it is certainly true that in Capital Marx was concerned only with the laws governing the development and destruction of capitalism, this does not suggest that Marx intended to restrict the subject matter of political economy. In fact, he says, Capital is directed precisely "at those vulgar economists who thought that they had discovered the laws governing all systems."³⁴ Marx, he says, wrote Capital from the stance of capitalism; and hence his purpose was not to trace its historical development through different stages; rather, it was to understand the basis for its realization as a continuous system. Accordingly, Marx's method must be applied flexibly, through an analysis of the differences and particularities within various economies. Ai notes, for example, that though the Soviet Union has reached a new

stage in its development, "there are still in many places the vestiges of capitalism, feudalism, and primitive village organizations," and how "these are to be drawn together" is, he contends, "the Soviet Union's greatest practical problem."³⁵ Therefore, as "there are no general laws governing economic stages,"³⁶ the only solution for Soviet theorists is to persist in the research into their specific economic situation.

The belief that the categories of political economy pertained solely to the workings of capitalist society was first advanced in the Soviet Union by Bukharin. In the Economics of Transition, written during the period of 'War Communism', Bukharin argued that in the creation of a socially conceived planned economy, where market mechanisms were no longer applicable, the "basic problems of political economy" would cease to exist.

When "relations between people" are not expressed in "relations between things," and the social economy is regulated not by the blind forces of the market and competition, but by a . . . plan, there can be no place for a science studying the "blind laws of the market" since there will be no market. Thus the end of capitalist commodity society will be the end of political economy.³⁷

Though this view, articulated during a period characterized by Utopian thought, was later denounced, along with Bukharin, it nevertheless gave rise to extensive debate through the twenties. The problem was that Soviet economic theorists could not agree over the fundamental question as to how the economy should be defined. At issue was the role of the socialist sector in a mixed economy; whether, that is, there were two separate regulators: the plan for the socialist economy, the market for the capitalist economy, or whether the plan was dominant in both.³⁸ As this problem was the source for continuous debate, and as stance determined an appreciation of the laws of political economy--whether, for instance, Marx's labor theory of value remained valid--it became increasingly difficult, indeed almost impossible, to structure a theoretical paradigm. By 1935, though, when Ai was writing his critique, this question concerning the claim (if any) of the categories of

political economy had been answered, at least officially. The passing of a resolution at the Seventeenth Party Congress calling for a new Constitution, and Stalin's well publicized address to that Congress, in which he declared that

the colossal progress in the economy and culture in the U.S.S.R. during the period under review has at the same time meant the elimination of the capitalist elements, and the relegation of the individual peasant economy to the background

that, ". . . the socialist form of the economic structure now holds sway and is the sole commanding force in the whole economy";³⁹ meant that for the leadership, the basic contradiction in Soviet society had been resolved. There was now correspondence between the base and the superstructure. Thus economists could occupy themselves with the purely technical problems arising from the planned application of the scientific laws of socialism.

Ai's insistence therefore on the mixed and contradictory character of the Soviet economy--the continuing problem of the integration of capitalist and feudalist 'elements', and the primitive village organizations--suggests that he neither accepted the theoretical claim of a strict harmony between the base and the superstructure, nor did he endorse Stalin's particular analysis. Here, it should be noted that if Stalin's argument, which was stated in January of 1934 was not known in Shanghai by June of 1935,⁴⁰ it was certainly known in its incarnation in the Soviet Constitution of 1936. And yet Ai's comments appear in his book Collected Studies in the New Philosophy, which was published in 1938, and which had its second printing a year later. Thus, irrespective of whether it was Stalin or Ai who was analytically correct, what it is important to recognize is that Ai had grounded his critical understanding in a theory of Marxism for China.

By defining Marxism as a method, as a theory of political economy whose continuing value presupposed its realization in a specific application, Ai not only refused to see its categorical laws (the negation of the negation, for example) as signifying a process of absolute transcendence, but, critically, he also implicitly

rejected any attempt to import a fixed strategy for China's development. His emphasis upon the idea that history does not progress mechanically through a uniform path, and his understanding that Marx's writings simply provided the constructs for analysis, meant that the Chinese road to socialism could only be determined by the Chinese themselves. Thus, he calls for increased research into China's particular situation. Chinese theorists, he says, must recognize that although China remains dominated by feudal structures, "this feudalism has not been able to sustain itself under the yoke of Western Imperialism. At the same time, capitalism has remained in embryo, and [thus] China's future is not the same as that of eighteenth century France."⁴¹ Hence the duty of political economists is to "analyze correctly the feudal system in China," and, specifically, to focus on "village relationships."⁴²

For Ai, Marxism was a dialectical system which supposed a thorough investigation of the various spheres that, however, transient, unified a moment; created, as it were, an historical situation. And it is the problem of the use of dialectical and historical materialism that is the subject of the last two points of his criticism of the Soviet textbook.

Ai's second point, closely related to the first, is that the authors misunderstand the working out of the laws of political economy; they omit the negation of the negation from the method of practical dialectics. Following from their premise that the study of political economy relates only to capitalism, they argue that not only is this law, made manifest in the internal development of capitalism, superseded in the transition to socialism, but that post-capitalist society is itself the realization of the negation of the negation. This belief, which was shared by theorists such as Bukharin and Deborin,⁴³ and which was later announced by Stalin in the fourth chapter of the Soviet Party History: A Short Course, was, of course, theoretically justified in terms of 'orthodox Marxism': Marx had made it clear that socialism was indeed the negation of the negation of

capitalism. Therefore, in his response, Ai diplomatically avoids a direct criticism of Soviet 'socialism', since this would have meant having to prove that it was still a non-socialist society where full negation had yet to be realized. Instead, he makes this point indirectly through a brief discussion of the meaning of this concept in the process of capitalist production as Marx had defined it.

Thus, he summarizes Marx's explanation as to how the sprouts of capitalism first appeared in feudalist handicraft industries, where the tools of labor were privately owned by the laborer; and how in the growth of capitalism, handicraft production was gradually replaced by that of industries and machines, where the ownership of those means were gradually assumed by the bourgeoisie. "Machines," Ai writes,

were not the laborer's, rather they belonged to the capitalist. That which is called deprivation of the means of production is that which had privately belonged to the laborer. Capitalist production is the maturation of this process.⁴⁴

What Ai emphasizes is that the dialectical principle of negation, as that which is revealed in the development of capitalism as a series of qualitative and quantitative transformations, makes manifest the concept of continuity within discontinuity, and discontinuity within continuity. For, the growth of industrial production, and with it the socialization of labor, provided a basis both for negation, and for a positive realization at a higher stage.

According to capitalist development, that which the capitalist owns and the social form of production are in violent contradiction. The result is the reversal of capitalism. That which was formally concentrated in the hands of the capitalist, the means of production, returns to the laborer; it is that which is called 'expropriating the expropriators'; it is the negation of the negation.⁴⁵

In the context of Ai's earlier arguments, the definition of the law of the negation of the negation as the expropriation of the expropriators, does not suggest a linear notion of course, but instead implies a qualitative transformation, the

character of which is determined dialectically by the specific situation in which it occurs. There is, in other words, continuity within discontinuity. Thus, Ai's point is that though the Soviet Union has reached a new level of economic development, it still retains the vestiges of its pre-revolutionary social and economic formations.

Ai's discussion of the process of negation in capitalism was clearly drawn in large part from Marx's chapter "The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation" in Capital. And in this, it is interesting to note is that it is possible to see in Ai's argument the beginning of an attempt to formulate a concept of alienation in Chinese Marxism.

Previously, Ai had shown that what was fundamental to man was that through labor he appropriated the objects of nature in a human way, and thereby recognized himself as a specific natural being. He now extends this notion by stressing the dual character of property. In the essential teleological process, property exists as objectification, as that which lies outside man and which he makes his own through labor. In capitalism, however, this dialectical relationship is itself mediated by private capital; teleology becomes the property of the capitalist. The loss of individual ownership over the means of production and over the positing of a goal, the fact that man's self-expression is revealed through an estranged form of objectification--private capital--signifies the alienation of man, in its broadest sense. And thus as a general concept, Ai establishes the reason for revolution in the breaking of the constraints on human appropriation.

Yet, if socialist revolution was the dialectical resolution of the contradiction between the relations of production and the forces of production, if it was to inaugurate, as he says, "a new period in human history"⁴⁶ (repeating Marx), the meaning of this in Ai's writings at this time remained somewhat unclear. For though he defined consciousness in terms of its dynamic relation to both the political and economic spheres, he had not truly explained, at least theoretically, what this really meant; what the function of consciousness was with respect to the

economy. This he does, in part, in his final criticism of the Soviet textbook, with his discussion of the role of historical materialism in the method of political economy.

He begins his analysis by observing that there are conflicting and incorrect theories as to the nature of the relationship between the relations and the forces of production. He says, for example, that though Bukharin argues that political economy is concerned with the form of transition in the history of the productive relations between men, that which Bukharin, "understands by the relations of production is just the equipment of man in the technological sector. The relations of production become an auxiliary of technology; the specific social relations become forgotten."⁴⁷ This, Ai says, is why Bukharin is called a mechanist. Conversely, Ai notes, there are idealists, such as Rubin and his followers, who see the productive forces as both determinate and yet external to the relations of production. As they "consider the productive forces to belong to technology and not to the social sphere,"⁴⁸ they maintain that the subject-matter of political economy relates only to the relations of production. They are idealists he says, because "they separate the relations of production from the productive forces, and consider the former to be self-moving, ignoring its material basis."⁴⁹ The central problem, Ai contends, is that both mechanists and idealists define the productive forces as equivalent to technology; and in so doing, they fail to realize that technology is "only one element of the productive forces,"⁵⁰ which presupposes the activity of labor. Technique, he stresses, is created by labor; it "functions within labor's goal projection,"⁵¹ and cannot exist apart from it. Therefore, Ai makes the critical point that the role of technology is not that which determines social and political development, but rather, that its role is determined by the structure of social relations.

It can be said, for example, that the technique in handicraft industry is the same. If the method of labor is different, however, then productivity will be different (the difference between household handicraft industry and workshop handicraft industry) [emphasis added].⁵²

Similarly, he notes that what is fundamental to the process of capitalist reproduction is the transformation of the economic and social position of labor, of which technical change is a part.

In the process of expansion and reproduction it is not only technique which is transformed, but there is, at the same time, a relative decrease in the change of capital (in the buying power of labor's capital). If one ignores the relative decrease in capital, then one cannot understand the significance of expansion and reproduction.⁵³

This analysis recalls Marx's discussion in Capital of the transition from guilds to manufacturing industry; a process, which in its early stages, involved a change not of technique, but rather, in the number of people employed. It was only with the structural transformation of that industry, and the establishment of a mass market, that the social and economic conditions required the introductions of machines. In other words, technological changes only came after, "the narrow technical base on which manufacture rested came into conflict with the requirements of production that were created by manufacture itself."⁵⁴ It is, of course, clear that with technology, economic development was thereby greatly increased; nevertheless, what Ai, as Marx, emphasizes is that it is the formal organization of labor extraction which determines the use of that technique. "The forces of production," Ai says,

come to exert their power under a definite mode of production. That which is called the mode of production . . . is the form of interaction between labor and technique; it cannot be separated from its determined social existence . . . it is internal to society.⁵⁵

Ai's criticism of the authors of the textbook is that they take a Bukharinist position, and thus fail to understand that the relationship between the economy and the superstructure is one in which the forces of production are dialectically mediated by the relations of production. "The relations of production," he says,

are not completely and mechanically determined by the productive forces, they have a relatively independent movement. This relative movement, however, from first to last, cannot be separated from its expression of the forces of production. This expression is, that there are times that it is able to promote the development of the productive forces, and that there are times that it becomes a fetter to this development.⁵⁶

It is the task therefore of political economists to analyze

how, at a given stage of development, the relations of production are determined by the productive forces, and how the relations of production realize their independence; how, from the function of promoting economic development the relations of production changes to obstructing this development, and how the forces of production can break through this fetter.⁵⁷

What is important to note is that this definition of the dialectic between economy and society is central to his argument that Marxism is applicable to China. For, in stressing the role of the superstructure, its ability either to aid or shackle development, Ai rejects the notion that economic productivity alone can bring about socialist revolution. This, he contends, is true irrespective of the level of economic development. Thus, as he wrote, a year after the seizure of power,

the fundamental question is one of controlling state power. If the old ruling group is weak and isolated, and if the revolutionary force is strong and is able to expand its alliances, then it is possible to seize state power even though the economy may be relatively backward . . . to deny this, even though the economy may develop to a higher stage, means that the revolutionary victory will still not be realized. This is one of the manifestations of the political superstructure vis-à-vis the economy.⁵⁸

Yet, in the 1930s, Ai was not engaging in revolutionary voluntarism. For though he locates the impetus of revolution in men's consciousness, in their recognition that they have created their own history (in circumstances not necessarily of their own choosing) which in turn is brought about, in part, by their grasp of the method of dialectical materialism, he does not suggest that capital accumulation is therefore an irrelevant prerequisite for the realization of socialism. To argue, as he does, that Marxism is a method, and that there are no invariant laws

through which all societies must pass, does not imply an abandonment of the basic tenets of Marxism; since, as he makes clear, the method of dialectical materialism cannot be separated from its conceptual theory. Instead, what he has shown in his analysis of the role of technology in the labor process, and in his discussion of the complex dialectic of economic determination, is that the accumulation of capital does not necessarily presuppose a pure capitalist structure of economic and political relations. Therefore to understand the role of capitalism in the development of a particular economy, its function must be seen within the context of its historical moment. To make this clear as it relates to China, it is helpful to note two articles by Ai: "On the Problem of Internal and External Necessity," written in 1936, and "On the Problem of Ideological Culture," written in 1937.

"On the Problem of Internal and External Necessity" was written in response to an article by Ye Qing, which unfortunately is unavailable; and therefore it is necessary to rely upon Ai's summary of Ye's argument. According to Ai, Ye maintained that China's contemporary history proved that the tenets of dialectical materialism was inapplicable in China. Starting from the theoretical premise that the particular could be separated from the universal, and in turn negate that universal, Ye stated that China's domination by Western imperialism showed that external forces could define the movement of internal contradictions. In other words, in contradistinction to the universal principle of dialectics that it was the internal contradiction which was the primary cause of change and development, Ye believed that in China, that which was external--the Western powers--determined the progress of that which was internal. Thus, while European history was "in congruence with the laws [of dialectical materialism] . . . for China it is otherwise."⁵⁹ He supported this notion with reference to the Communist Manifesto, where, he said, Marx demonstrated how Western capitalism extends itself from its home markets to "recreate the world in its own image."⁶⁰ "The cheap prices of commodities," Marx wrote (quoted by Ye),

are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all the Chinese walls . . . it compels all nationals, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves.⁶¹

Thus, Ye argued that though dialectics may perhaps explain the mechanisms of Western imperialism--how the West arrived at its position in China--it could not explain the contradictions produced internally in China, as the antagonisms were externally created and internally controlled.

There were three constituent elements to Ye's thesis. First, there was the theoretical assumption that the notion of the particular could be divided from the universal such that each became completely autonomous. The particular as a that is, could either belong to A or non-A, but it could not be both. Second, there was his definition of Marxism, discussed earlier, as a system of universal and invariant laws, where matter developed in linear motion. Here again, Ye made it clear that one either accepted these categories as absolute or not. Therefore to attempt to construct a theory explaining China's particularity through an acceptance of these universal laws became for Ye a self-contradiction: the universal was specific to the West. Concealed within this, there was what might be called the common sense aspect to Ye's thesis: the reality of China. For, to defend Marxism as applicable, required an explanation as to how principles grounded in developed Western capitalism could be used in a semi-colonial, underdeveloped country. And, it is important to remember that Ye was not engaging in a scholastic debate; rather he was directing his argument at those students and intellectuals in the cities, especially in Shanghai, who were far from clear as to either the meaning of Marxism and its role, if any, in China, or as to the position and function of Western imperialism. This underlined the third element of Ye's thesis, the belief in the absolute power of the West to be able to structure and restructure the internal mechanisms in China. Thus, a counter-argument to Ye not only presupposed a different conceptualization of Marxism, but it also demanded a sense that it was reasonable. Put another way,

the task, for someone such as Ai, was, in part, to provide a theoretical justification for hope.

Ai's article "On the Problem of Internal and External Necessity" was a critique of Ye's understanding of Marxism. Ai's views as to the determinate character of Western imperialism will be discussed later, in connection with the problems involved in the attempt to concretize Marxism in China.

Ai begins his argument by emphasizing that the concept of internal necessity, as the particular, cannot simply be segregated from that which is external, or that which exists as a universal principle; instead, they must be seen dialectically. "The specific and the general exist in a dialectical unity; there is not a pure universal, and, similarly, there is not a pure particularity which exists outside this universal." Though the "internal progresses under the influence of the external," is mediated by it, "the internal cause is primary."⁶² This, he says, is made quite clear by Marx's concern in the Manifesto to provide a concept for the general direction of capitalism; and not to "research into specifics."⁶³ Thus an analysis of the actualization of this movement, has "to rely on each country's internal contradictions; its dissimilar particularities. Marx did not indicate this point because his basic responsibility in the Manifesto was to indicate a general theoretical tendency."⁶⁴ "If, one asks, why did American capitalism destroy the Indians, or why did capitalism in China result in a semi-colonial society, this can only be answered through research into the particular aspects of a situation."⁶⁵ The basic argument here, is of course one which Ai had made previously, and thus the question here is how he saw the unique development of capitalism in China.

In his essay, "On the Problem of Ideological Culture," Ai contends that national capitalism began to develop during the period of the May 4th Movement. The celebration of individualism, and of science and democracy which typified that era, were expressions of a nascent bourgeoisie, which was attempting to break through the fetters of feudalism.

China's new intellectual and cultural movement was at the same time a resistance movement against feudal traditions . . . it was a movement of significant value, produced under the new conditions and new requirements of developing capitalism.⁶⁶

Yet, he notes, that the task of capitalism, "to establish a capitalist social system and culture,"⁶⁷ could not be achieved by this Chinese bourgeoisie, as it was enfeebled both by the international money market, and by infighting among imperialist powers in China. Therefore, as opposed to Western capitalism, which was able to supersede the bonds of feudalism, Chinese national capitalism has remained in embryo. This is why Ai rejects any comparison of the May 4th Movement as a cultural renaissance, with either the European Renaissance, or, most aptly, the French Enlightenment. For, as he said in his notes on the Soviet textbook on political economy, "whereas in France in the eighteenth century the problem was primarily political, in China it is economic."⁶⁸ Ai, of course, understood the political crisis facing indigenous capital, but he emphasized that their particular dilemma was inseparably bound with the overriding problem of national liberation. It was precisely because the bourgeoisie was weak and ill-suited for its tasks, that economic development presupposed independence. "We rely," he says,

on general historical laws, capitalism develops from feudalism. The process of development in Europe and America, however, took as its principle problem the struggle for civil rights in breaking down feudal privileges; the problem of liberation was secondary, and not of true significance. In China, although a new society requires the establishment of people's rights, the most important problem is that of people's liberation.⁶⁹

Accordingly, Ai calls for a broad anti-imperialist patriotic movement, a New Enlightenment Movement, to gain independence, and to promote democracy for the people. This belief in democracy meant that for Ai, the movement's primary responsibility remained that of encouraging capitalist growth. "China's present task still is the task of capitalism. It remains that of desiring a democratic spirit, or desiring the people's liberation, [and of . . .] promoting the development of progressive capitalist elements."⁷⁰ Though, at one level, he identifies the

maturation of capitalism as positive, in that by its own logic it initially requires some form of democracy, he argues, that because of the distinctive situation of the Chinese bourgeoisie, the negation of feudalism can only be assumed by a broader based movement. And since the resolution of the primary contradictions of capitalism has a different historical basis from that in the West, it will therefore be given a different historical direction. What Ai stresses is that this new cultural movement exists in a dialectical relationship with that of the May 4th, in that it continues to pose the issues of the earlier period, but that it will, of necessity, resolve them at a higher stage.

The new cultural movement . . . is a negation of the negation of the May 4th movement . . . the meaning of the negation of the negation is to resolve at a higher basis the tasks raised at a previous stage . . . in China, because national capital is too weak to grow, because it itself cannot solve the problems indicated for it, it therefore must be carried through by the development of a counter force; and it itself will be resolved at an even higher basis.⁷¹

Writing in 1937, in a period of flux, when the main task was that of liberation, Ai could not define the precise mechanisms needed to restructure capital. Moreover, an attempt to sketch the constructs of a post-liberation society was bound to be somewhat meaningless, as it was dependent upon an awareness which, according to Ai's own understanding of Marxism, could neither be known or anticipated. Though it was this non-determinism which helped to provide the resistance movement with a sense of theoretical identity, it was precisely this lack of a notion of future certainty, which created the paradox over the relevance of theory. For, though in a broad sense, Ai's interpretation of the categories and meaning of Marxism fulfilled the responsibility of being immediately suited to practice, in that it offered the tools of analysis through which the movement could begin to understand and transform its historical situation, this Marxist theory could not be completely integrated with the strategies and tactics necessary for liberation. This was because the movement for independence, led by the CCP possessed a dual nature; it was

both active and reactive. It was active, in that the leadership could advance and attempt to realize its proposals concerning the method for struggle; and it was reactive in that these proposals were determined and mediated by a variety of internal and external events over which the Party had incomplete control. The Japanese invasion, the fight with the KMT, the growth of Germany and its position within a changing world order, the size of China and the consequent differences in social and political awareness, meant that military and political tactics became inseparable, each a function of the other, conterminous within their own dynamic. Despite a stated intent, the instability in China required a pragmatic response which could only loosely be tied to more abstract concerns. To put it crudely, Marxist theory was basically irrelevant to battle. Thus, the role of political philosophy became that of attempting to influence, however remotely, the political direction of military strategy; to provide the elements of continuity such that later practice--after the seizure of power--could conform at some level to pre-existing theory. The primary duty of philosophers was to train Party members in method and goals, so that a foundation would be created for the future struggle for socialist construction. Their task was to emphasize the importance and value of theory so that later, there would be an effort to concretize those notions posited by it. The critical relevance of philosophy lay in being able to guide the movement to the realization of its own theory, and as a consequence, to its own transcendence as praxis.

2

The antinomy in role clearly suggested that theory could be reduced to a symbolic object. The problem was that in attempting to establish its own significance, its hermeneutic value would degenerate into justifying, rather than informing the passionate response to the situation in China. Thus, before the seizure of power the intent of theory to serve would result in the dialectical negation of content.

Ai recognized the vulnerability of theory from its defined function, and when he was co-editor of a leading left-wing journal in Shanghai, Reading Life (Dushu Shenghuo), he wrote numerous articles stressing the importance of critical reasoning. In a published letter to students, for example, he warned that those who wished to leave school and "go amongst the people,"⁷² needed to do so with their emotional certainty guided by thought. Otherwise, if

hopes are too great, then despair will be even greater. If ideals are too high, then the fall will be particularly hard. This comes from ignoring reality, from not understanding that our goal is the result of our struggle within reality.⁷³

Therefore, he cautioned students that,

we should not develop our slogans and principles from our aspirations, but should develop them from the people themselves, from their specific concerns, and for their benefit . . . we should not regard them lightly because their ideals are not ours.⁷⁴

Yet the tension between theoretical and emotional awareness was not readily resolved. And the difficulty in creating a positive disposition toward theory is brought out in Ai's discussion of the critical question concerning the efficacy of resistance: how could China, as a semi-colonial country, be able 'to maintain its independent face'. This issue was first raised in a letter to him, written in response to his article "Four Principle-Philosophical Problems."

In this essay, Ai had argued that whereas formerly the principle contradiction in China had been externally determined and internally mediated--that there was a dialectical balance between the desire of the external powers to further their aggrandizement of China, and their recognition that to do so militarily might stir internal resistance, and thus jeopardize their existing privileges--that this had been superseded to become an internal contradiction, which therefore demanded an internal resolution.

That China is able to maintain its independent face is due to the fact that it has already granted the imperialists special privileges, which (like taxation) they rely upon to obtain great economic benefits. If they were to advance a step and occupy China militarily, then these privileges would not develop. This is a kind of contradiction. This, however, is a thing of the past. This contradiction has developed to the present such that, due to the world economic crisis, the imperialists can no longer use peaceful means to resolve their economic problems. Thus there arises the urgent danger of military occupation; and as the strength of each imperialist power in China is not in equilibrium, the crisis of the Chinese people is reaching a head.⁷⁵

This argument, which appeared in Reading Life caused some confusion among the journal's readership. For, it was thought that Ai was suggesting that military force would only be employed if economic benefits did not continue to accrue to the imperialists, but as military power had already been used to enforce financial development, this reasoning seemed rather fatuous. Thus, to clarify both his position and their own, those who wrote to him outlined three views on imperialism in China.

The first was that China was able to preserve its independence because of the equilibrium among the various powers; but this they rejected by noting the troubles with Japan. The second, which they understood to be Ai's point, was that it was not the parity of power, but the contradiction resulting from the need for economic control, which prevented full military occupation. This they said was also incorrect, because it neglected the fundamental contradiction, which was that between the imperialist powers and the unified desire of the Chinese people for liberation. "Every Chinese," they wrote,

is concerned with our own national situation; and when the opportunity arises [for struggle] they will all throw themselves into it . . . in the end, the fundamental contradiction develops from that between the imperialists and the semi-colonial people. This makes it clear why the people's institutions have an independent form of existence . . . moreover, this explanation is able to provide the Chinese resistance with a correct direction.⁷⁶

Ai replied to this by first expressing his basic agreement with the argument of his readers. He notes that it would be a mistake to suggest that there was a previous separation between the military and economic power of imperialism in China (though he says that this was not his intention), and therefore he accepts the contention that the fundamental contradiction is that between imperialism and semi-colonialism. What he does not believe is that there is a unified consensus for resistance; instead he maintains, the people are deeply divided. "Dialectics," he says,

sees the internal contradiction as that which is most important; the internal contradiction determines the essence of all things and events . . . the internal contradiction in China still is the disunity within the resistance line, and the strong existence of traitors.⁷⁷

Thus, he calls for a counter-movement, a struggle against those who openly and covertly aid imperialism.

Ai's article was also designed as a response to the arguments of Ye Qing on internal and external necessity. The brief comments on the internal contradiction were intended to demonstrate that the dialectical method could both justify and direct the movement for liberation. Yet, when the question of the possibility of resistance was raised directly to him, in a letter concerned with the problem as to whether China would suffer the same fate as that of Abyssinia, he adopts basically the same argument, that of a deep belief in the people's desire for resistance, that he had previously criticized.

The students who wrote to Ai asked if the loss of Abyssinia did not signify that a nation which was ill-equipped militarily would inevitably fail to a superior power. And with sincerity, they pleaded for a suitable answer to use against those who were advocating non-resistance: "not only are we unable to conquer our theoretical enemies, we are not even able to conquer ourselves."⁷⁸ To this, Ai replied less in terms of theory and rather more in terms of a pragmatism grounded in feeling.

Thus having pointed out that historical conditions must be examined objectively, in their uniqueness, and not through some all-embracing formula, he argues that there are specific advantages to the situation in China--as opposed to that in Abyssinia. These are: that the Chinese people have "gained valuable experience in their several dozens of years of fighting imperialists";⁷⁹ that "China's standing army is first in the world";⁸⁰ and that the "Chinese people are politically more advanced than the people of Abyssinia, and have a close relationship to the army in the resistance struggle."⁸¹ Further, he says that the Abyssinian commander-in-chief made a tactical error in not pursuing a guerrilla war, one which would have expanded the people's participation; whereas in China, it is precisely the strength of the people which has prevented destruction. This explains "why in the final analysis the enemy has gone to great lengths to avoid a direct war with the Chinese people. At the same time, it is possible to understand what road must be taken to save China."⁸²

These kinds of arguments, on theories of imperialism and the significance of the loss of Abyssinia, might be seen as intellectual concerns removed from the more immediate situation in China. It might be said that during the middle 1930s the social and political situation in China clearly required direct political action; and that those who doubted not only the course but the meaning of involvement itself were merely a small and insignificant minority. The difficulty with this is that it obviates the complexities surrounding the creation of a resistance movement, and it presupposes the myth that a revolutionary or resistance movement necessarily reflects a unanimity of opinion. The tensions and conflicts which have characterized the French and Russian revolutions, however, have shown that a revolution is composed of groups with quite divergent attitudes, where there is only a primary level of common commitment. In the Russian Revolution, for example, Stephen Cohen has noted that,

though Russian Bolshevism was only one small current of European Marxism before 1917, it included rival intellectual schools and political tendencies of its own. Some Bolsheviks had been influenced by other European Marxisms, some by non-Marxist ideas, some by Russian populism or anarchism . . . in short behind the facades of professed political and organizational unity known as "democratic centralism" there was no consensual Bolshevik philosophy or political ideology in 1917.⁸³

Indeed, Bukharin characterized the Party as a "negotiated federation between groups, groupings, functions, and 'tendencies.'"⁸⁴ Moreover, it is not always true that those who engage in movements do so out of a clear awareness of their own self-interest. The support of the workers in both Italy and Germany for fascism, for instance, proves that the use of symbols, of historical myths, and of a variety of cultural elements, can be employed to persuade and determine consciousness. Therefore it is important to understand both the reality of the concern expressed by the students who wrote to Ai, their desire to root the possibility of practice within a social philosophy (which, as Etienne Balazs has observed, is one of the distinguishing features of Chinese intellectual history)⁸⁵ and the crisis of theory; its own negative dialectic.

For, the contradiction between Ai's emphasis upon both the unity and division within the resistance movement, and the lack of a theoretical critique in either his article on imperialism or that on the fate of Abyssinia, shows not that theory and practice were irreconcilable, but rather that the necessities of analysis and encouragement required a basic theoretical synthesis. Indeed, if the function of theory as an anodyne could not be integrated dialectically within its heuristic role; if, that is, the basic appeal to the notion of 'internal contradictions' could only assuage fears, but not inform, then any notion of the dialectic would suffice to create the requisite feeling of momentum. In this sense, theory as ideology would become an object of both defined and ill-defined intentions. Therefore, within this period of internal disequilibrium, revolutionary theorists attempted to create a sense of organization through which theory could be integrated, at some level, with practice.

And here, the problem of organization has to be seen both in a broad and narrow sense: broad, in that the CCP was not itself clearly set in terms of its strategies and tactics, and narrow, in that it was impossible for many intellectuals, particularly in Shanghai, to proclaim their allegiance to the Party for fear of the reaction of the KMT.⁸⁶ And thus the task for theorists was directed toward the propagation of an auxiliary movement to the CCP, where theory could maintain some ability to affect. This, irrespective of the fact that it could only establish a belief in resistance from anticipatory categories, which themselves could only inform immediately at the level of preliminary response.

This sense of structure was to be realized in the New Enlightenment Movement,⁸⁷ a campaign based upon the ideals of democracy and patriotism. But here, what is of importance is not the movement itself, that was soon abandoned under pressure from the KMT, but rather the diversity of opinion with which its founders, Ai Siqi and Chen Boda, conceived it. For Chen's understanding of Marxism and its importance for the Chinese Revolution differed significantly from that of Ai. And as his argument, as well as Ai's, helped to define the eventual statement on synthesis: Mao's concept of sinification, his views deserve some consideration.

The predominant theme in Chen's writings during this period of the New Enlightenment Movement was that of preservation: his concern was to cultivate China's cultural identity, and hence keep it safe. "The coming of a new historical period," he wrote, "means the creation of a new culture and a new ethics . . . nevertheless we are historians, and we recognize that the production of a new morality cannot be unrelated to the development of the old."⁸⁸ Therefore, notions such as "loyalty, piety, benevolence etc. have a value in the content of this new history . . . they become new ethical virtues."⁸⁹ This dialectic of old forms with new content, the absorption of Confucian values into a contemporary framework, meant not only that these concepts would now "follow from the people, instead of

enslaving them,"⁹⁰ but that in so doing they would become a fundamental part of the struggle for resistance. Indeed he notes that the political direction of cultural movements is a distinguishing feature of modern Chinese civil society: "the outstanding vanguard of a cultural movement often is the loyal and energetic vanguard within patriotic movements."⁹¹ From this, he argues that the New Enlightenment Movement is discontinuously a continuation of the 1898 Reform Movement. "China's Enlightenment Movement began during the 1898 Reform Movement . . . and this movement is similar to that of the present." The qualitative difference between them however is that the former, "reflected the capitalist relations of its time . . . and was thus not formed by the masses. It only represented the call of upper stratum ideologist."⁹² Conversely, the idea of the New Enlightenment Movement is to be sought in the coalescence of all the people; everyone, Chen says, must defend China.

We must necessarily place the success of the resistance struggle in the forefront. Our battle line of the unity of resistance, containing dissimilar social strata, dissimilar parties, and people of dissimilar beliefs, is a point that we must necessarily bear in mind.⁹³

We . . . demand unity.⁹⁴

It may be argued that this "cultural-intellectual"⁹⁵ approach, as Lin Yusheng has defined it in terms of the May 4th generation, where culture is given primacy as the guide to political involvement, reveals the dialectic between past and present categories in Chen's thought. His desire for the integration of a new content within traditional moral forms would thus be seen as typical of a conceptual approach which maintained itself through a continuous process of synthesis. In this, Chen's method had, as it were, two levels: one traceable with respect to an historical (inherited) pattern, the other novel in relation to historically specific constructs. Though Lin's argument appears justified, and is certainly imaginative, it must not obscure the pragmatic concerns underlying Chen's efforts to revivify, and hence re-establish, upon a different basis, a cultural identity for China. For, as the New

Enlightenment Movement occurred during a period of organizational vacuity, the notion of a connection with the past became for some the only means through which political activity could be encouraged. In fact, Chen declared that in the absence of a commonly recognizable ground, the idea of China's heritage would remain abstract, concealed, and therefore open to manipulation. "One must remember that at all times the enemy will use China's classics to deceive the people."⁹⁶

To preserve our ancient culture, to preserve our ancient holy land, to ensure that the "classics" are not used by the enemy to dupe compatriots, we willingly approve of the unity of all compatriots who oppose the enemy. Moreover, we place them in the vanguard of the struggle.⁹⁷

The conjuncture of the dialectic of thought with that of necessity in Chen's writings is perhaps most clearly reflected in his call for the propagation of a new popular culture based upon traditional local forms.

Because the people's culture in each area of China has its own particularity, our people's cultural movement not only desires "Sinification," but also "localization." We want to use each locality's traditional cultural form so that it will suitably benefit the needs of the people in each area.⁹⁸

Thus, throughout his essays, Chen stresses that, "each area should fully utilize its own dialect and particular form in the writing and printing of books. Reading material which is very good should be reprinted in the version of the dialect and form of a particular area."⁹⁹ This principle that "new wine could be poured into old bottles" first articulated by Qu Qiubai, accented both Chen's belief in the transcendent nature of traditional constructs, and his practical awareness of the facility with which they could be used to express novel, and contradictory, ideals. "The great expanse of the common people's customs and habits," he writes, "come from old cultural forms. To propagate the new cultural content through the use of old forms will therefore make it easier for them to accept."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, he notes that there has been a continuous problem when there has been flight from this historical

ground. "All our past cultural movements have proven that to ignore old cultural forms will make it extremely difficult for education in this new culture to penetrate to the masses."¹⁰¹ Thus, Chen emphasizes the intermediary function of past values and habits as a conductor for that which is new, and which will in turn create its own suitable mode of expression. "The new content," he says, "will develop and continuously conquer the old form, making it an appendage . . . in the transition to a new form."¹⁰²

The theme of historical awareness, of the amalgam of past with present as an educative device, indicates that at one level, the tensions between history and value, which Levenson analyzed, survived, but in a transfigured way. For Chen Boda, it was precisely because Marxism had remained ill-defined and insufficiently transmitted, that it became necessary to re-teach the past. The problem of historical dislocation arose not out of the psychological dilemma to find meaning to that past, but rather because this new conceptual framework remained inadequate in being able to provide in that meaning an identity for resistance. And it is this lack of concern with the exigency of historical teaching, and the over-certainty surrounding Marxism's hermeneutic role, that leads Chen to criticize the work of his contemporary theories. "Ai Siqi's attempts to popularize philosophy have been epoch-making," he says. "But within his work he has neglected certain areas, specifically he has not paid enough attention to the relationship between all of Chinese history and the present reality."¹⁰³ "We still lack a great work concerning Chinese social history . . . Chinese intellectual history . . . and Chinese contemporary economics."¹⁰⁴ Thus, he calls upon intellectuals to fulfill their responsibility by supplying the Chinese people with the essential works of their own social sciences so as to provide the people with the tools of enlightenment.

Yet, at another level, these tensions which Levenson discussed as characteristic for the early generation of modernizers, do seem to typify the thought of Chen Boda. Ironically, this is because Marxism remained an abstraction; and as

it was unable to supersede the antinomy between history and value, the conscious understanding of the dialectic between past and present remained unresolved. Thus, the use of tradition provided not only a pragmatic solution, but, within Levenson's framework, a psychological one as well. This is reflected in Chen's attempt to give his present concerns a sort of indigenous genealogy, by trying to find in Chinese history the nascence of modern dialectics.

In brief, his argument is that the epistemic of dialectics, which he sees as the relationship between thought and action, was first given a materialist explanation by Mo Zi. It was he who "took practice and behavior as the criterion of knowledge."¹⁰⁵ This understanding of some kind of unity between thought and being was developed throughout the dynastic period, in particular by Wang Yangming in his philosophy of Ji-liang-zhi. Wang, though, was an idealist; his theory of the moral mind, which translates thought into spontaneous practice, gave primacy to the power of ideas. Therefore, Chen says that to re-establish the materialist basis within his philosophy "one must reverse the reversal of his idealism."¹⁰⁶ "Knowledge," he notes, "must be seen as developing from practice, for practice is the basic movement of history."¹⁰⁷ This materialist conception, he says, was recognized by Sun Zhongshan, who advocated "learning by doing."¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Sun realized the importance of theory as a guide for practice, and thus he said that though the enemy could kill his body, it could not destroy the effect of his thoughts. According to Chen this is a crucial insight; for not only does it reveal the dialectic between theory and practice, but it also emphasizes the necessity of theoretical work. If, he says, "ideas can develop as a material force" ¹⁰⁹ (quoting Marx), and that it is only through theory that thought may progress, then theorists must be cognizant of the roots of their philosophy. "One aspect of original revolutionaries is that they benefit from their inheritance of the best from the past, and from that which is outstanding in their intellectual and cultural tradition."¹¹⁰

Without this kind of understanding, a revolutionary movement simply wavers in a vacuum.

The suggestion that materialist concepts were traceable, could be found within traditional epistemes, that the idea of the unity of thought with being found expression in the values of benevolence, virtue, loyalty, etc., demonstrates that for Chen there was a real and not significant content to history.¹¹¹ Indeed, it was precisely in the historical concretion of the 'museum' that tradition would be superseded, and be realized as a new theory and practice. In this dialectic, old forms would be reconstituted at a higher stage, without either being completely negated or reduced to an abstract value. At the same time, it is equally clear that if theory were not to dissolve into an admixture of borrowed and rediscovered philosophical constructs, then the conscious integration of past forms within a new conceptual framework presupposed a basic understanding of historical and dialectical materialism. The ambiguity concerning the definition of Marxism, particularly as it explained continuities and discontinuities, could itself only be recognized, if there was at least a primary understanding as to its content and meaning. Although Chen's writings on Marxist philosophy are not extensive, an impression of his thoughts on the idea of the dialectic and its application may be drawn from two articles: "The Decline of Decadent Philosophy," and "On the Theory of China's Self-Awakening."

In "The Decline of Decadent Philosophy," which was written as an attack on Ye Qing, Chen contends that materialist dialectics are founded upon the recognition of historical necessity; on, that is, an awareness of the linear movement of an invariant logic. In other words, as with Ye Qing (though clearly for different reasons) Chen basically accepts Engels' interpretation of dialectical materialism. "Although one may consider oneself free," Chen argues, "in truth one is dependent upon the blind movement of necessity."¹¹² He illustrates this with an example of a

factor owner, whose independence in the planning of production is itself subject to the blind laws of development.

The contradiction between production and depreciation which occur under the anarchic conditions of commodity production as an historical necessity (one which is completely outside the consciousness and will of the capitalist, and which he does not understand) becomes a periodic crisis in capitalism, which leads to its dissolution.¹¹³

Conversely, what distinguishes dialectical materialism is that through it, there may be a conscious application of the laws governing the development of nature and of history.

Contemporary materialists are historical determinists; they recognize that nature and history are not confused and without system but progress according to fixed principles. Contemporary materialists are not, however, fatalists; they understand that man is produced in history, and that history is created by man. Although men receive the determination of necessity, when this is understood they can themselves determine that necessity.¹¹⁴

(As Engels said in the Anti-Duhring, "freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature, which is founded on knowledge of external necessity."¹¹⁵)

It was in the article "On the Theory of China's Self-Awakening" that Chen rooted his conception of the dialectic in the movement of Chinese history. Unfortunately, it is not available. There are, however, two independent summaries of his explanation, in both Ai Siqu's article, "The New Enlightenment Movement and China's Self-Awakening," and in He Ganzhi's contemporary account The Modern Chinese Enlightenment Movement,¹¹⁶ and as both descriptions are basically similar, and as both conjoin with Chen's definition of the dialectic, it does seem fair to summarize succinctly, Chen's Marxist interpretation of the New Enlightenment Movement.

According to Ai, Chen argued that this movement represented the second qualitative stage in the continuous dialectical progression, manifest through the

negation of the negation, of the advance toward freedom and independence. The first stage, which culminated in the 1911 Revolution, was itself the negation of the negation of the Reforms of 1898, and was the realization, at a higher level, of the aims of the Taiping Rebellion [now Revolution], which, though it failed, marked the first organized attempt to overthrow the rule of the Manchus. For Chen, the 1911 Revolution initiates a new period in Chinese history; one in which the Chinese people began to become aware of their destiny. And it was Sun Zhongshan, he says, who, with his Three People's Principles, provided this movement with the method, and the solution as to how to guide the people to full self-consciousness and freedom. The New Enlightenment Movement, in turn, was for Chen the negation of the failure of the Northern Expedition, and the concretion, at a qualitatively higher stage, of the process begun in 1911. It was that stage where the people, through Sun's principles and Marxism, participated in the resistance effort 'in' and 'for' themselves.

The difficulty with Chen's understanding of dialectics was that, following Engels, he posited the subject-object dialectic in undialectical opposition. Therefore, his objectification of the dialectic as autonomous and invariant, and his rejection of the notion of fatalism, leads him to adopt the voluntarist approach of identifying the Chinese resistance movement as both the subject and object of history. Rather than ground his conception of the dialectic in the complex relationship between consciously directed activity and a given, objective historical circumstance, Chen simply hypostatizes thought such that it becomes its own material object. Hence his stress upon the Three People's Principles, which as the method for (and the result of) the grasp of the otherwise blind movement of the negation of the negation, becomes necessary and sufficient for practice. It is this definition and use of the dialectic that Ai directly criticizes. Chen, he says,

has revealed the aspect of revolutionary means and measures; he has shown that the soul of the Three Great Policies are the Three People's Principles, and that they are the fundamental method through which to resolve the three problems of the people . . . to discuss this, however, is only to explain the subjective aspect, it does not explain the objective basis for the resolution of the problem. We not only want correct measures from the subjective aspect, but we must also necessarily understand its objective material basis.¹¹⁷

Accordingly, Ai says that the origins of the New Enlightenment Movement lay in the weakness of nascent capitalism to establish itself fully during the 1911 Revolution, which meant that though this movement was democratic, it was still forced to rely upon feudal structures in order to develop. Thus, "China became unified in name and semi-divided in practice."¹¹⁸ It was during the period of the Northern Expedition, however, that this weak bourgeoisie was able to assert its independence such that Chinese capitalism gave rise to a laboring class. The New Enlightenment Movement he says, is therefore characterized by the temporary unity of two distinct parties of conflicting interests; the product of a particular process of capitalist growth. It is clear from this that for Ai, the concept of negation derives its meaning from its historic context, from within; otherwise it would exist as a malleable category, whose function would lie purely in justification, invoked, in this sense, from without.

The contrasting interpretations of Ai and Chen concerning the idea of the dialectic, derived not only from their analyses as to the definition and use of Marxist categories, but also from their differing perceptions as to the relationship between theory and practice. For, implicit in Ai's understanding was the argument that theory could only play a positive role, if its function were first grasped philosophically. In other words, theory in and for practice: praxis, presupposed its own grounding in a systematic framework. Though this might seem obvious, or indeed a tautology, it was precisely because the form and content of the dialectic between theory and practice had neither been clearly recognized nor established, that

Ai, through explanation, continued his efforts to create an appreciation for the importance of critical awareness.

In his article "One Cannot Relax One's Ideological Duty," for example, he again warned of the danger of a purely emotional response to the crisis in China. Here, he points out that passion without reason leads to emotive violence, and internal disruption.

The strength of the unified resistance movement cannot be based on blind and popular groups, but must result from clear consciousness. People consider the immediate killing of a traitor to be satisfying; yet if one acts by relying on the momentary impulse of indignation then . . . the danger, conversely, is that people will strike at their own compatriots. In the resistance movement it is not that we lack passion or anger, rather, one fears that there is too much of it.¹¹⁹

Consequently, he links the growth of false consciousness to the inability of organizations to provide a coherent direction to the efforts at resistance. This, he says, has been characterized by a structural alienation, where people are either forced back into their small group identifications--which some "curse as useless, and a waste of spiritual energy"¹²⁰--or where they become totally isolated: "there are those who cannot find organizations, and whose work thus becomes completely without method."¹²¹ The supersession of this situation requires the rectification of organizations, and this assumes an understanding of the activity of ideology.

What Ai meant by this was made clear in the essay, "The Conceptual Form in the Time of Emergency," where he makes the critical point that the function of ideology in organization must itself be seen dialectically. Having defined ideology as the "theoretical representation of the consciousness of an organization,"¹²² Ai argues that an organization in turn is mediated by its own ideology: theory defines the intention of that organizational consciousness in praxis. "The conceptual form not only represents the common consciousness of an organization, but at the same time, even more clearly, it determines that common consciousness."¹²³ He gives an illustration, the ideology of hedonism, with its fixed and thorough advocacy of

enjoyment. "This conceptual form," he notes, "does not merely represent the consciousness of a group, rather it is the organizer of the group's consciousness."¹²⁴ Thus, he emphasizes that if it is recognized that ideology and organization exist as mutual determinants, then it will be understood that "correct scientific philosophy and progressive art can expand our consciousness, can make it more resolute"; whereas "decadent art and incorrect scientific philosophy can pull us on to the wrong road."¹²⁵

Ai's argument was designed to state theoretical principles in such a way that the structuring of organizations would itself be rooted in the awareness of the dialectical function of theory. Because he saw ideology as, in part, the representation of a group's consciousness, he attempted to create in that consciousness a desire for theory, which would in turn become reflected in that organization; in, that is, theory's own presuppositions. In effect, he was stating the problem from both sides: from theory down, and from organization up. This form of argument mirrors the content of his article "The Democratic Principle of Mass Organizations," where he contends that the formal structure of organizations must be from the top down, and from the bottom up.

What we call the bond of democratic organization is that the leadership, from the top downwards, cannot be separated from the organizational relationship, from the bottom upwards. To break this kind of organizational relationship, means that . . . all planning would then have to rely on the weak brains of a few high level individuals.¹²⁶

This notion of a "mass-line" in organizational structure makes it clear that for Ai, the responsibility of ideology lay in the constant reconstruction of that consciousness which in form it expressed. And this begins to suggest a broadening of his earlier analysis concerning the relationship between the base and the superstructure. For, whereas previously he defined the superstructure as that which dialectically reflects the base, he now extends this idea, to see the process of enlightenment and that of political practice as necessarily mediated by organization.

Therefore the function of ideology, as the dialectical representation of a complex of mutually interacting complexes--art, philosophy; each with its own relative autonomy--as the dialectical synthesis of the form and content of conceptual consciousness, becomes that of judging critically its own form from that content, as it is revealed in practice. Its role becomes that of preventing, both in theory and in intended practice, the false reconciliation of subject and object. Thus, the critique of Chen Boda's conception of the dialectic, and the attack upon weak-minded functionaries, had as its object the recognition that theory without content, without the ability to negate and make clear the limits of its own form, simply adorns action. Categories which themselves lack a clear underpinning, become slogans. And therefore the preservation of dialectical theory requires in its acceptance as value, the understanding that its principle lies in negation, in the supersession of immediacy. This is why Ai emphasizes that as a method, Marxism is not tied to any set notion of linear progress. For, at this level, false ideas, whatever their intent (to convince, for example, that history is on one's side) lead to myth.

Notes

- 1 Karl Marx, The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Martin Milligan trans, David J. Struik (ed.), New York: International Publishers, 1963, p. 170.
- 2 Ye Qing, "Jinian Hegeer" (Commemorating Hegel) in Ye Qing, Hegeer (Hegel), Shanghai, 1935, p. 68.
- 3 Ibid., p. 59.
- 4 Ibid., p. 59.
- 5 As quoted by Ai Siqi in "Hegeer de diandao" ("On the theory of the reversal of Hegel") in Ai Siqi, Xin zhexue lun ji (Collected studies on the new philosophy), Shanghai, 1935, p. 10. The original is unfortunately unavailable.
- 6 Ibid., p. 13.
- 7 Friedrich Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy in Lewis S. Feuer, Basic Writings of Marx and Engels, Glasgow: Collins The Fontana Library, 1969, p. 265.
- 8 In the essay "Les Maos en France" Sartre writes, "mais en peut, comme l'a fait souvent Engels, en particulier dans L'Anti-Duhring, substitues a l'histoire que font les hommes une economic qui se fait par eux mais, pour ainsi dire, sans eux." Jean-Paul Sartre, Situations, X, Gaillmard, 1976, p. 45.
- 9 Quoted in David Joravsky, Soviet Marxism and Natural Science: 1917-1932, London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1961, p. 80.
- 10 Ibid., p. 80.
- 11 Friedrich Engels, The Anti-Duhring, New York: International Publishers, 1972, p. 16.
- 12 Quoted in Gustav Wetter, Dialectical Materialism, Routledge, London: Kegan Paul, 1958, p. 286; see also pp. 280-309. For Lenin see Materialism and Empiro-Criticism, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1972, esp. Chapter Two, part 4, "Does Objective Truth Exist?"
- 13 Joravsky, p. 182.
- 14 Ibid., p. 267.
- 15 Ai, "Hegeer de diandao," p. 6.
- 16 Ibid., p. 7.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 12-13.
- 18 Ibid., p. 14.

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- 19 Ai Siqi, "Cong xin zhexue suo de shengwu zhuguan" ("Human subjectivity as seen by the new philosophy") in Ai, Xin zhexue lun ji, p. 50.
- 20 Marx, Manuscripts, p. 177.
- 21 Ai Siqi, "Dongwu you-meiyou benmeng?" (Do animals possess instincts?) in Ai Siqi, Zhexue yu shenghuo, Shanghai, 1936, p. 82.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 81-84 esp. p. 82 where Ai notes that in contrast to a colony of ants, for example, whose productive capabilities are limited to their instincts, and are thus unchanging, "humans continuously transform their instruments of production and the manner of their use, and thereby transform the relation between themselves."
- This, of course, recalls Marx's celebrated comment in Capital, that "we pre-suppose labor in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality." Capital, vol. 1, More and Aveling trans., New York: International Publishers, p. 178.
- 23 Ai, "Cong xin zhexue suo de shengwu zhuguan," p. 43.
- 24 Ibid., p. 44.
- 25 Marx, Manuscripts, p. 182.
- 26 Ai, "Cong xin zhexue suo de shengwu zhuguan," p. 43.
- 27 Karl Marx, German Ideology, in Easton and Guddat, Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and History, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1967, p. 432.
- 28 G. W. F. Hegel, Philosophy of Right, T. M. Knox, trans., Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1967, p. 11.
- 29 Ai Siqi, "Cong xin zhexue suo de shengwu zhuguan," pp. 56-57.
- 30 Ai Siqi, "Guanyu yin lun he waiyin lun" ("On the theory of internal and external necessity"), in Ai, Zhexue yu shenghua, p. 42.
- 31 Ai Siqi, "Wenyi de yongjiu xing yu zhengzhi xing" (On art's eternal and political nature") in Ai, Xin zhexue lun ji, p. 184. For his argument that Hiroshi Kawaguchi is repeating Lenin's theory see p. 169.
- 32 Ibid., p. 180.
- 33 Ibid., p. 180.
- 34 Ai Siqi, "Zhengzhi jingji xuefangfalun de piping" ("Criticism of the method of political economy") in Ai, Xin zhexue lun ji, p. 114.
- 35 Ibid., p. 113. In "The Changing Function of Historical Materialism," Georg Lukács makes the similar point that Marx wrote Capital from the stance of capitalism, and was not concerned with attempting to sketch a theory of development through which all

societies had to pass. "The substantive truths of historical materialism are of the same type as were the truths of classical economics in Marx's view: they were truths within a particular social order and system of production. As such, but only as such, their claim to validity is absolute. But this does not preclude the emergence of societies in which by virtue of their different social structures other categories and other systems of truth prevail." Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, Rodney Livingstone trans, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971, p. 228. And it is of course in his essay "What Is Orthodox Marxism" that Lukács emphasizes, as does Ai, that Marxism is method. "Orthodox Marxism, therefore, does not imply the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations. . . . On the contrary, orthodoxy refers exclusively to method." History and Class Consciousness, p. 1. For a further discussion by Ai, see pp. 111-112 ("Zhengzhi jingji xuefangfalun de piping") where he writes that Capital was written for the proletariat, "to explain the laws of capitalism's development and decline."

- 36 Ai Siqu, "Zhengzhi jingji xuefangfalun de piping" ("Criticism of the method of political economy"), in Ai, Xin zhexue lun ji, p. 114.
- 37 Quoted in Stephen F. Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution, New York: Vintage Books, 1975, p. 93.
- 38 For a discussion of these debates see Adam Kaufman, "The Origins of 'The Political Economy of Socialism,'" Soviet Studies, no. 4, 1953, pp. 243-272.
- 39 Josef Stalin, "Report to the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," January 26, 1934, in Bruce Franklin (ed.), The Essential Stalin, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1972, pp. 245-247.
- 40 For example, in 1935 Shen Zhiyuan, a leading political economist, wrote an article which was little more than a translation of a Soviet declaration on the achievements of the Stakhovite movement in the same year that it had begun: "Sulian erjie wunian jihua de di sinian" ("On the fourth year of the Soviet Union's second five year plan"), Xin Zhonghua zazhi, no. 13, vol. 4, 1935, pp. 71-77. A year before he also wrote an article, "Deguo dao he chu qu" ("Which way is Germany going?") in which he not only criticizes fascism in Germany, and analyzes it in terms of the problems of capitalism, but discusses the brutality of the Nazi regime, and their use of Konzentration-slages (lao dongying). Amongst other points, this shows both the flexibility of the approach of some left-wing intellectuals toward the Soviet Union (in that Soviet policy at that time was one of accommodation with Germany) and that some Shanghai intellectuals were rather well informed. Xin Zhonghua zazhi, no. 3, vol. 1, 1934, pp. 37-46.
- 41 Ai, "Zhengzhi jingji xuefangfalun de piping," p. 114.
- 42 Ibid., p. 114.
- 43 See Wetter, Dialectical Materialism, pp. 355-356.
- 44 Ai, "Zhengzhi jingji xuefangfalun de piping," p. 117.
- 45 Ibid., p. 117.
- 46 Ibid., p. 117.

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- 47 Ibid., p. 120. For a similar critique of Bukharin see that of Lukács, who, in his review of Bukharin's Historical Materialism, says "Bukharin attributes to technology a far too determinant position, which completely misses the spirit of dialectical materialism. . . . He asserts that in the 'last analysis' society is dependent upon the development of technique . . . it is obvious that this final identification of technique with the forces production is neither valid nor Marxist." Georg Lukács, N. Bukharin: Historical Materialism," in Georg Lukács, Political Writings 1919-1924, Michael McColgan trans., Rodney Livingstone (ed.), London: New Left Books, 1972, p. 136.
- 48 Ai, "Zhengzhi jingji xuefangfalun de piping," p. 120.
- 49 Ibid., p. 120.
- 50 Ibid., p. 120. As Lukács also says, "Technique is a part, a moment of great importance, of the social productive forces, but it is neither simply identical with them nor (as some of Bukharin's earlier points would seem to imply) the final or absolute moment of the changes in these forces." See the review of Bukharin, p. 136.
- 51 Ibid., p. 120.
- 52 Ibid., p. 121.
- 53 Ibid., p. 121.
- 54 Marx, Capital, p. 368.
- 55 Ai, "Zhengzhi jingji xuefanffalun de piping," p. 121.
- 56 Ibid., p. 124.
- 57 Ibid., p. 125.
- 58 Ai Siqi, Shehui fazhanshi jiangshou tigang (A teaching outline of social developmental history), Shanghai, 1950, p. 27.
- 59 Ai, "Guanyu yin lun he waiyinlun," p. 38.
- 60 Ibid., p. 38.
- 61 Ibid., p. 38. As Ye's quote is directly from the Manifesto, the translation is that in Karl Marx: The Revolutions in 1848, Political Writings vol. 1, David Fernbach (ed.), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973, p. 71.
- 62 Ibid., p. 40.
- 63 Ibid., p. 44.
- 64 Ibid., p. 44.
- 65 Ibid., p. 44.
- 66 Ai Siqi, "Lun sixiang wenhua wenti," in Xin chaoliu de Zhongguo sixiang yundong, Xia Zhengduan ed. ("On the problem of ideological culture," in Symposium on new trends in Chinese Thought), Shanghai, 1936, p. 18.

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- 67 Ibid., p. 19.
- 68 Ai, "Zhengzhi jingji xuefangfalun de piping," pp. 112-113.
- 69 Ai, "Lun sixiang wenhua wenti," pp. 20-21
- 70 Ibid., p. 23.
- 71 Ibid., p. 25.
- 72 Ai Siqu, "Dao xuexiao qu, dao minjian qu" ("To go to school or go amongst the people") in Ai, Zhexue he shenghuo, p. 145. The quote is from the title.
- 73 Ibid., p. 151.
- 74 Ibid., p. 154.
- 75 Ai Siqu, "Zhexue wenti si ze," in Ai, Zhexue he shenghuo, p. 74.
- 76 Ai Siqu, "Banzhimindi he yi neng baochi duli de waimian" ("How a semi-colonial country is able to maintain its independent face") in Ai, Zhexue he shenghuo, p. 88.
- 77 Ibid., pp. 92-93.
- 78 Ai Siqu, "Zai lun Abisiniya de shibai" (Again on the loss of Abyssinia") in Ai, Zhexue he shenghuo, p. 104.
- 79 Ibid., p. 107.
- 80 Ibid., p. 108.
- 81 Ibid., p. 111.
- 82 Ibid., p. 111.
- 83 Cohen, Bukharin, p. 5.
- 84 Ibid., p. 5.
- 85 Etienne Balazs, Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy, Arthur F. Wright ed., Yale U Press, New Haven, 1964, p. 195.
- 86 See Lee-Hsia Hsu Ting, Government Control of the Press in Modern China: 1900-1949, Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Research Publications, 1977.
- 87 There is some debate as to who initiated the call for this movement. He Ganzhi, in his account Jindai Zhongguo gimeng yundong shi (The history of the modern Chinese enlightenment movement) written in 1938, argues sole credit belongs to Chen Boda; whereas the introduction to Xin chaoliu de Zhongguo sixiang yundong which was written by, amongst others, Zhou Yang, He Ganzhi, and Ai Siqu, gives credit both to Ai and to Chen (p. 9). What seems to be likely is that the specific name originated with Chen Boda, in his article in Dushu Shenghuo (which of course was edited by Ai Siqu), "Xin qimeng yundong shi de jianli" ("The foundation of the new enlightenment

movement"), and that because of Ai's leading position as a theorist, and due to his efforts to popularize philosophy, he was considered a founder in his own right.

- 88 Chen Boda, "Lun Kang ri wenhua tongyi zhenxian" ("The theory of the united cultural front in the Anti-Japanese resistance") in Chen Boda, Zai wenhua zhenxian shang, Shanghai, 1935, p. 55.
- 89 Ibid., p. 56.
- 90 Ibid., p. 56.
- 91 Chen Boda, "Women guanyu riqian wenhua yundong de yijian" ("Our opinion concerning the cultural movements of the recent past") in Zai wenhua zhenxian shang, p. 83.
- 92 Chen Boda, "Lun xin gimeng yundong" ("On the theory of the new enlightenment movement") in Xin chaoliu de zhongguo sixiang yundong, p. 62.
- 93 Chen, "Lun Kang Ri wenhua tongyu zhenxian," p. 62.
- 94 Ibid., p. 63.
- 95 Yu-shen Lin, "Radical Iconoclasm in the May Fourth Period and the Future of Chinese Liberalism" in Benjamin Schwartz ed., Reflections on the May Fourth Movement: A symposium, Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Research Monographs, 1972, pp. 32-58.
- 96 Chen, "Lun xin gimeng yundong," p. 51.
- 97 Ibid., p. 51.
- 98 Chen Boda, "Lun wenhua yundong de minzhong chuanfong" ("On the theory of the people's traditions in the cultural movement") in Chen, Zai wenhua zhenxian shang, p. 63.
- 99 Chen Boda, "Jiu xingshi de liyong" ("The function of old forms," in Chen, Zai wenhua zhenxian shang, p. 35.
- 100 Chen, "Lun wenhua yundong de minzhong chuanfong," p. 68.
- 101 Chen, "Women guanyu riqian wenhua yundong de yijian," p. 93.
- 102 Ibid., p. 93.
- 103 Chen Boda, "Zai lun xin gimeng yundong" ("Again on the theory of the new enlightenment movement") in Xin chaoliu de zhongguo sixiang yundong, p. 90.
- 104 Ibid., pp. 90-91.
- 105 Chen Boda, "Guanyu zhi-ying wenti de yanjiu" ("Research concerning the problem of thought and action") in Chen, Zai wenhua zhenxian shang, p. 98.
- 106 Ibid., p. 99.
- 107 Ibid., p. 100.

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- 108 Ibid., p. 106.
- 109 Ibid., p. 115.
- 110 The use of significant here refers specifically to Levenson's distinction between the historically significant--where the past is "a subject for study and not action"--and historical significance--where the past "is given value in the present, outside of its historical context." Hence, Levenson's argument that the Chinese, in creating their 'museums' made their past merely historically significant, and in so doing created the possibility of regarding that past with historical significance. Joseph Levenson, Confucian China and Its Modern Fate, Vol. III, The Problem of Historical Significance, Berkeley: U. of California Press, pp. 90-91.
- 111 Chen Boda, "Fubai zhhexue de laomai" ("The decline of decadent philosophy") in Dushu shenghua, No. 2, Vol. 4, March 1936, p. 41.
- 112 Ibid., p. 41.
- 113 Ibid., p. 41.
- 114 Engels, Anti-Duhring, p. 125.
- 115 For Ai's description see "Xin qimeg yundong yu Zhongguo zijuexing" ("The new enlightenment movement and China's self-awakening movement") in Xin chaoliu de Zhongguo sixiang yundong, pp. 78-80. For that of He Ganzhi, Jindai Zhongguo gimeng yundong shi, pp. 210-211.
- 116 Ai, "Xin qimeng yundong yu Zhongguo zijuexing," p. 80.
- 117 Ibid., p. 81.
- 118 Ai Siqi, "Buneng fangsong sixiang de kanwei" ("One cannot relax one's ideological duty") in Wenhua zhunxian, First Issue, 1936, p. 4.
- 119 Ibid., p. 4.
- 120 Ibid., p. 4.
- 121 Ibid., p. 5.
- 122 Ai Siqi, "Feichang shi de guannian xingtai" ("The conceptual form in the time of emergency") in Ai, Zhexue he Shenghuo, p. 130.
- 123 Ibid., p. 131.
- 124 Ibid., p. 131.
- 125 Ibid., p. 131.
- 126 Ai Siqi, "Minzhong zuzhi de minzhu yuanze" ("The democratic principle of mass organizations") in Wenhua zhunxian, Issue 3, 1937, p. 24.

CHAPTER 2

IDEAS CONCERNING THE DIALECTIC: THE ATTEMPT TO DEFINE A THEORY OF CHINESE MARXISM

The writings of Ai and Chen during the mid-1930s were, in some respects, marginal to the more concrete concerns of the Party. The controversies in Shanghai, while clearly responsive to the crisis in China, were still separate from the disputes which were occurring in Yan'an. And thus, the removed quality to the problems of ideology and organization was, in a sense, superseded when these somewhat abstract concerns were concretized within the Party's formal structure; when, that is, Party philosophers were called to Yan'an.¹

This gathering of theorists was part of a move by Mao toward the consolidation of power. It was a step in the process of assuming unquestioned leadership over the contentious pro-Soviet faction within the Party, through the affirmation of political and ideological solidarity. And it was within this context, among theorists who seemingly agreed only upon the importance of a federated Marxism, that Mao delivered a series of lectures on dialectical materialism. He gave three speeches covering categories and concepts, which were the cumulation of the essentially private study of two translated textbooks on Soviet philosophy. These were, A Course on Dialectical Materialism by M. Shirokov and A. Aizenberg et al., which was translated into Chinese in 1936, and Dialectical and Historical Materialism by M. B. Mitin et al., which was also translated in 1936. There were of course a number of other translated works which were available to Mao throughout this period, but it does appear that these two treatises provided the basis for his interpretation of the dialectic.

In one respect, these lectures were expected. A demonstration of theoretical ability, some knowledge of the workings of the dialectic, was part of the criteria for

leadership in a Marxist Party. This had become almost law after Lenin's extensive writings on philosophy. And it certainly would have been important for Mao to show that he was not simply a military strategist, but that he was also capable of understanding theory.

His political situation, however, demanded something more than a standard speech. In the face of an opposition trained in Soviet Marxism Mao could not simply repeat Soviet definitions as to the categories of the dialectic. In order to impress and to support his claim to power, he had to offer a new interpretation.

Forced into creativity, Mao ended up denying the very premise of his political position. The lectures categorically denied the possibility, and the desirability, for a sinification of Marxism. And in this regard all these lectures were consistent. The irony is, that in attempting to manipulate concepts which he clearly did not understand, Mao undercut the basis of his own stance. It is not surprising, therefore, that years later he would deny any connection with these speeches.²

The problem with Mao's argument lies in his confused discussion of two related laws: the unity of opposites, and the negation of the negation. But in order to make this clear, it is important to understand how these laws are basically defined within the canon of Marxist dialectics.

In dialectical materialism, the law of the unity of opposites is founded upon the idea that negation is inherent within all positive determinations. And that it is through the internal conflict of opposites that there is a continuous development to higher forms. The concept of contrary opposition--what is called contradiction--is thus understood as the condition of the real: the state of all states of affairs. Each thing is said to contain within itself its own contradiction, and things are said to be in a state of contradiction with each other.

In both conditions, the premise of contrary opposition relates to the predicate. There is an assumption of a (temporary) unity of a subject. And therefore the conflict between opposites, the contradiction between things, refers to

predicates with positive determinations which are mutually exclusive within a restricted context.

In the lectures on dialectical materialism, Mao confuses the subject with the predicate. That which is inherent becomes the subject of its own definition. Difference (and Mao uses difference and contradiction interchangeably) becomes Identity. A thing is no longer characterized as a unity of opposites, where negation exists in a reciprocal relation with affirmation; instead, contradictions come to exist on their own, in unity and in contradiction with other contradictions.

What this means is that when a contradiction, A, is negated through its interaction with another, contradiction B, the result is something higher and completely different: a new affirmation. This distinct identity is the product of the negation of the negation. "In the process of development of things and concepts," Mao says, "not only are their internal contradictory elements made manifest, but these contradictory elements can be removed, negated, and resolved to become a new and higher thing or concept, change to become a higher thing or concept. Correct thought should not exclude the negation of the negation."³

This concept of the negation of the negation denied the very premise of a sinification of Marxism. To argue that an affirmation assumes a complete negation made it clear that the adoption of a Marxist-Leninist stance demanded the negation of all preceding philosophies. This is why Mao called for the "liquidation of China's philosophical heritage."⁴ For this was a statement of precondition: a Marxist stance supposed the complete eradication of all those non-Marxist philosophies which constituted China's intellectual history. Hence, in this philosophy, antinomies were conceived as complete and self-contained; that which was positive negated its other.

This prohibitive aspect to categorical use makes it clear that Mao did not understand (nor does he seem ever to have understood)⁵ that the law of the negation of the negation proceeds from an initial affirmation, which is maintained throughout

a discontinuous process, and is then restored at a higher level. This is the meaning of a determinate negation: that which is positive is preserved within the discontinuity of qualitative transformation. Ascension contains regress within itself. There is always a sense in which that which is affirmed returns to its original point, but these points of return continue to be higher, since the whole process is assumed to be evolutionary.⁶

Ai Siqi had been quite clear on this. In an article concerning the relationship between formal and dialectical logic published in 1936, he had explained how the dialectic should be understood in terms of preservation and cancellation.

Ye Qing notes that sublation is not simply sublation; denial is not simply denial. And here he appears to be correct. Though sublation is in one respect the sublation or the negation of the negative thing, in addition there is also that aspect of the positive transformation and criticism of the thing which preserves it. This obviously is not simple sublation.⁷

The problem with Ye, however, is that he sees this relation mechanically; one area is preserved, while the other is negated. He separates and divides. Instead, Ai says, this relation should be seen dialectically, with respect to the mutual interpenetration of opposites. The idea that

'A is A' at the same time that 'A is not A' should not be treated as 'one aspect and another aspect', rather they are interconnected. These two propositions are a unified whole. Since they are not mechanically bound, therefore they cannot mechanically be broken.⁸

Ai's point is that since opposites are interrelated, then neither negation nor affirmation may ever be considered as complete acts in themselves. There are no pure states. Instead, the theory of the dialectic implies that as a positive contains within itself its own opposite, so is its higher re-affirmation dependent upon its own negation.

This is not how Mao understood the dialectic. He saw negation quite literally as the opposite of affirmation. In this context, a negative was a something

which had to be negated. It was only with such a complete act that an identity could be affirmed. An identity therefore was a state; a realized moment which occurred in contrast to the conditions which preceded it: The 'C' which results from non-A, non-B. And here, it is important to make this distinction between state and condition clear, because it helps to explain Mao's reified concept of the dialectic.

To do so requires that Mao's marginal notes to his philosophical readings be taken into account.⁹ For it is in the reading notes to the Soviet textbooks, and to Ai Siqi's Philosophy and Life, that Mao elaborates on the argument that he makes in his public lectures. The use of these notes therefore is simply to help to clarify that which was openly expressed. There is no attempt here to try to find another philosophical system in what are soliloquive writings.

The point to be noted then, is that Mao seems to separate the character of movement out of creation, so that flux becomes a permanent other to subjective moments of realization. Hence, there is a qualitative difference between the finalized state of a thing, and that which constitute the attributes of that thing in its transition from state to state. A state is something definite, a concretion; whereas its condition is that which identifies the content of a thing as it moves from one achieved state to another. "That which is considered as the basis of a developmental process," Mao says,

is namely a process of transformation from one kind of condition to another kind of condition. This is the development of a contradiction; that which is called a leap or sudden change. To consider this [process of transformation] as the basis, is to search for prerequisites, the condition and its realization for a new stage.¹⁰

This is the movement of the unity of opposites through a process of affirmation, negation, and the negation of the negation. It is that which characterizes aspects in transition. And though the content of a particular course is specific to itself, the end is predetermined: that which negates the initial affirmation will ultimately be negated. When this occurs, a new Identity is created. "All phenomena" Mao writes, "are [examples of] the law of Identity. Although there are

various kinds of stages, they are still entirely a kind of particular secondary process. They still reside within the law of Identity."¹¹

A thing which is in Identity is a realized affirmation. It is also the complete other of a negation. "Struggle," Mao says,

is where sides are in opposition. Identity is where both sides are peaceful. The state is where both sides are opposed, Identity is the liquidation of the state. Because mutual opposites exist as the condition of a process, to go through struggle is to overcome opposition, and thus to be able to evolve to an Identity.¹²

This Identity is to be seen as a Contradiction. This is how it is real. Thus, as a Contradiction it exists in unity with other Contradictions. But this unity is temporary, because the true state of a thing is to be in struggle with other Contradictions. "The unity of contradictions itself," Mao says in his lectures, "just makes manifest the struggle of contradictions; or just is an element in the struggle of contradictions."¹³

There are then two processes, two types of struggle. The first refers to the resolution of an internal negation which leads to an affirmation: a pure state. But since everything is assumed to be in a condition of flux, this affirmation cannot exist other than as a Contradiction. And here, it is important to remember that Mao insists that everything is in contradiction. Indeed, he criticizes Ai Siqu for failing to recognize that "all difference is contradiction."¹⁴ Therefore, a thing in Identity must be a Contradiction. The affirmation which results from the final negation takes its place as a positive antinomy, because this is the only way that an affirmation could be distinguished as the other of negation, within the permanent state of contradiction. In other words, the predicate could only be sustained as a subject, if the character of that predicate was also maintained. This is what Mao does with the idea of the unity of contradictions: he turns a copula into a subject, which is then defined in terms of the assumed philosophical condition of history.

This logic denied any concept of a sinification of Marxism. Instead, the reception of Marxism was seen as dependent upon the negation of its ideological other: Chinese history. And on this point, Mao was quite clear.

If we wish to ensure that the current of dialectical materialist thought will penetrate deeply into China and continue to develop, and will, moreover, firmly direct the Chinese revolution along the road to complete victory, then we must struggle with the various decadent philosophies which currently exist. We must raise the flag of ideological criticism on the ideological front throughout the whole country, and thereby liquidate the philosophical heritage of ancient China. Only thus can we reach our goal.¹⁵

Since Mao's categories of value were based upon a principle of exclusion, there was no aspect of China's culture which could be integrated within another intellectual framework. And thus for Mao, the point of the whole movement toward enlightenment, toward the development of a national culture, was to prepare the ground for a proper negation. It was to guide change toward a real affirmation; the creation of a new Identity. "To raise the national culture," Mao says, "is to prepare the conditions for changing to an international culture. . . ."16 "We make the declaration that we are internationalists, but at the same time, because we are a political party of a colony, we struggle for the protection of the motherland. Only when we have first escaped from imperialist oppression can we participate in a world communist society. . . ."17

The conception of negation as an evolution from the particular to the universal underscores the philosophical fact that in the interest of Marxist preservation, these lectures on dialectical materialism cancelled the idea of the dialectic. In turn, this discarding of the concept of synthesis makes these statements philosophically unique. Hence with regard to the writings of Mao, the lecture on contradiction is not philosophically comparable to the essay published on this theme in 1952. The similarity of reference: the name contradiction, must be distinguished from the contrasting sense in which this name was given meaning.¹⁸

The importance of "On Contradiction" will be discussed at length in the second half of this work. It may simply be stated here, that "On Contradiction" provided the philosophical underpinning for the idea of sinification. Through the category of the "unity of opposites," "On Contradiction" transformed the conception of the relation between the universal and the particular, so that the universal came to be seen as the requisite of that particular. And while Mao made it clear that the correct ideas of Marxism were always to be rooted within the specificity of China's ground, this idea was expressed through a principle of integration, an idea of the dialectic, which was foreclosed in 1937. In short, it was only with the publication of "On Contradiction" in 1952 that theorists were able to utilize Mao's Marxist philosophical perspective.

There are those, however, who have tried to read the theme of "On Contradiction" back on to the lectures of 1937, in order to establish a sense of continuity.¹⁹ But this effort at retrieval rests on a fundamental philosophic misunderstanding. The concept of a "unity of contradictions" is incoherent, and therefore it may not be discussed as the logic-equivalent of the concept of the "unity of opposites," which is the centerpiece of "On Contradiction."

The notion of contradictions existing in unity or in contradiction with other contradictions is meaningless; is self-contradictory. And statements on contradiction may not violate the rules of formal logic. As Stanley Rosen points out, "to assert, for example, that a concept corresponds to the predicate 'p and non-p' makes it clear that contradictions are intelligible, not that we can construct arguments using contradictory statements."²⁰ It is a serious mistake therefore to try to deconstruct the concept of the "unity of contradictions" to some verbal shell so that it might carry a (more desirable) content. Mao's explicit statements on the dialectic in 1937 had meaning; they led to a clear ideological position. And thus his argument concerning the roles of affirmation and negation, and their expression in the call for the 'liquidation of China's philosophical heritage', may neither be

discarded nor side-stepped, because they otherwise are incomprehensible, or because the statements seem historically discordant. Mao meant what he said: the affirmation of Marxism supposed the evisceration of China's cultural heritage.

It should also be noted that Mao is not entirely consistent in his use of the notion of contradiction in the lectures of 1937. At times, he seems to suggest a different process to negation depending upon whether that which is negated is a contradiction or an opposite. This, of course, is in keeping with his basic distinction between the two. Thus, in his first lecture on dialectical materialism, he says, for example, that "a new form of motion occurs as the opposite of (or in antagonism to) an old form of motion . . . at the same time the new form of motion necessarily preserves many essential elements of the old form of motion."²¹ Moreover, in the margins of one of the translated Soviet textbooks, he does note that negation is not absolute. "Negation does not destroy everything; it does not divide the old and the new. It is not absolute, and that which moves forward contains that which came before. . . ."²² But, he also asserts that, "all processes change from their contradictory opposites to an identity; change to a negation of the negation."²³ This means that the rise of a new Affirmation (Contradiction) assumes a level conceptual ground unified beyond opposition. "New things," Mao says, "occur as the resolution of the original contradiction. At the same time that the original opposites and their unity are eliminated, new contradictions begin to develop."²⁴ And this underlines the consistency of his overriding point: each new identity was subject only to itself.

It is important to recognize that Mao seems never to have grasped the concept of a determinate negation. It appears that he always believed that negation signified unwanted negativity. And this is brought out, emphatically, by the fact that when, in the late 1950s, he re-embraces that same philosophical structure of understanding which had informed the lectures on dialectical materialism, he simply tosses the category of the negation of the negation from the canon.

Engels talks about the three categories, but as for me I don't believe in two of those categories. (The unity of opposites is the most basic law, the transformation of quality and quantity into one another is the unity of the opposites quality and quantity, and the negation of the negation does not exist at all.) . . . There is no such thing as the negation of the negation. Affirmation, negation, affirmation, negation . . . in the development of things, every link in the chain of events is both affirmation and negation. Slave-holding society negated primitive society, but with reference to feudal society it constituted, in turn, the affirmation. Feudal society constituted the negation in relation to slave-holding society but it was in turn the affirmation with reference to capitalist society. Capitalist society was the negation in relation to feudal society, but it is, in turn, the affirmation in relation to socialist society.²⁵

This understanding that the purpose of movement was to be realized in completion, makes it clear that despite the débâcle of the lectures on dialectical materialism, Mao retained his un-dialectical conception of the dialectic, whereby predicates were transformed into newly affirmed subjects. This suggests, in turn, that this particular logic was neither transformed, nor cancelled by the arguments of "On Contradiction." Instead, these earlier concepts were, in effect, pushed back to what might be called a second philosophical line, where they remained until Mao returned to his unguarded and unchecked philosophical musings. In other words, as opposed to the argument of "On Contradiction," where the understanding of the "unity of opposites" as a dynamic relation took fifteen years to develop, and had the benefit of critical commentary, Mao's later statements on philosophy mark a return to that same mode of thought which had discredited his lectures on dialectics. The only substantive difference is that in the late 1950s he was finally able to remove the idea of a dialectical process from the permanence of contradiction. This is the point of casting the negation of the negation aside. For only then could affirmation truly stand as a full subject in opposition to its constant other. The theory, unencumbered by the dialectic, is actually rather straight forward: there is only one affirmation at any time, which is eventually destroyed after an indeterminate period. And out of this void a new positive is created, which then repeats this whole process ("affirmation, negation, affirmation . . ."). "One thing," Mao says,

"destroys another, things emerge, develop, and are destroyed, everywhere is like this."²⁶ This new positive which occurs after negation, Mao termed the "affirmation of negation."²⁷ It was a concept of affirmation as identity; the rebuke of emptiness.

This philosophical understanding was at one time restated as Mao's "poor and blank" thesis: the idea that upon an empty mind the most beautiful characters could be written. But this was only one form of an idea which had first been expressed in the late 1930s. It would be a mistake therefore to see this theory of the "affirmation of the negation," and the denial of the negation of the negation, as signifying a decisive shift in Mao's philosophical thought.²⁸ Though it might be argued that his approach moved in another, less Marxist, direction in his later years, this change may not be found in his discussion of the related ideas of negation and affirmation. On the contrary, these constructs simply reiterated, as a refined philosophy, the essential argument of Mao's earliest discourse on contradiction.

This aspect of continuity underscores the importance of the framework which guided the initial lectures on dialectics. And in this regard, the philosophical environment in which Mao's theories were formulated should be made somewhat more clear. For he was certainly not alone in his understanding of the dialectics of negation.

As has previously been discussed, Chen Boda also conceived of negation as a self-contained and completed act. But this argument, which Ai Siqi had rather pointedly criticized, led to a radically different conclusion from that offered by Mao. For Chen, the working out of the negation of the negation proved the need for a nationalized form of Marxism. His idea of the dialectic supported the idea of sinification, whereas Mao's concept denied it. Therefore, it would seem that Mao's final schema was basically self-formulated. And while this does appear to be the case, it should also be noted that at this time, Li Da was advancing a theory of negation which was not so far removed from the philosophy of Mao. In other

words, during this period, there was a context, a representative attitude of thought, of which Mao's particular statements were a singular part.

Li Da argued that negation was a quality which permeated the entire process of contradiction. It was that which both initiated and resolved the course of the dialectic. Negation was the one constant. "Within each stage there are many negations . . . the law of the negation of the negation is not realized in the law of three stages; this is very clear."²⁹ What he seems to have meant by this, was that negation was the force which operated through, and defined, those opposites united in contradiction. Thus, negation functioned as the cunning of the dialectic, as a moment between opposites. At the same time, since it was always there, negation both preceded and was the product of the final negation--the negation of the negation. "Within each thing itself, it is the stage before sublation. It is the relationship permeating the whole process of contradiction within each stage of the whole process."³⁰ "Negation is the result of the course of the internal development of a contradiction."³¹

This idea of an affirmative negation is meaningless: a pure negation may not be the continuous product of development. Indeed, there would be no development. But the point to note here, is that Li's notion that negation is somehow the result of the negation of the negation shares the same theoretical basis as the argument of Mao. In other words, though they both characterize the result of the dialectical process differently, their terms refer to the same event: a state in which the dialectic is completed as a unique positive. Since Li understands negation as extinction, then it follows that, that which is truly affirmative has to be something entirely new. When Li Da separates negation from the category of the negation of the negation, so that the latter exists as a separate identifiable stage, while negation exists as the activity which both precedes and succeeds that stage, he makes it clear that the stage of the negation of the negation had itself to be negated. This means that each positive filled a void; provided an identity for that which otherwise would

remain blank. Accordingly, if anything was to exist, there had to be an affirmation of the negation.

Though this conclusion was dictated by reason, it was never stated. Li, that is, never moved beyond philosophical explanations of the negative. And therefore, the concept of the positive as recompense, was unique to Mao. This then suggests that Li had little influence on Mao's theoretical development.³² As philosophers of the dialectic they rambled separately. In fact, in 1938, commenting on Li's explanation concerning the negation of the negation, Mao writes to himself, "this is unclear," "this still is unclear," and "this is all unclear."³³ The point therefore to recognize is that during this period, there was a common structure of reasoning which guided the distinctive arguments of Li, Chen, and Mao. They all shared a literal, undialectical, interpretation of the dialectic, which was the product of a specific political commitment to a nationalist Marxist stance.

Thus, the categories of the dialectic were never allowed any theoretical authority, but were defined instead in terms of concrete concerns. Principle was governed by attitude. And it is this refusal to try to understand meaning independent of the immediacy of political need, that ties Chen's simplistic reading of the negation of the negation, to Li's "floating negation"; and both of them to the débâcle of Mao's lectures. Yet, at the same time, it is important to realize that Mao's philosophical failure was also the result of his rejection of a claim for a general status to Marxist political philosophy.

What governed the lectures on dialectical materialism was Mao's belief that theory is never neutral: it always acts as an ideology. This insight, which forced him to move beyond a mere demonstration of competence in his lectures, was of course shaped by the political history of the Comintern in China, and by the activities of the 'returned students' within the Communist Party. It is not necessary here to recount the long and complex dispute between Mao and the 'returned students'.³⁴ But it is necessary to note that as these 'returned students' justified

their factional position, in part, through their understanding of Soviet Marxism, so Mao came to identify the theoretical constructs of this Marxism with the imposition of policy. This means that he read Soviet philosophy within the subtext of domination and control. Truth expressed political interest; and all works were representations of particular relations of power. Instead of a generalized essence, an "orthodoxy", there were only collections of statements of instrumental value. This understanding of content as the completely internalized dictum of political authority, left meaning without an independent, substantive basis. And in turn, this foreclosed the possibility for theoretical speculation. "Seventeen and eighteen year old babies," Mao wrote, "are taught to nibble on Das Kapital and Anti-Duhring. Thus many students develop an abnormal outlook; they have no interest in Chinese problems, and pay no heed to Party instructions. Their inclination is to regard what they have learned from their teachers as dogma."³⁵

With this statement, the idea of critical reasoning vanishes. Theory becomes objectified as an exhaustible determination. And where intention so governs, there is no theoretical point of resistance. This explains how texts could betray; for their intellectual expressions were merely the cover for that which had already been submerged. Mao's recognition of the ideological character of theory did carry with it a sense of endorsement; an accepted understanding of the foundations of control. But here, in this formative period, what it is critically important to note is that this extinguishing of content turned upon a logic which could only conceive of an *other* in absolute terms. This meant that Mao saw power simply as the negation of truth; its affirmation. And therefore as there was no truth content which was redeemable, so was there no inherent meaning which could survive the process of adaptation. "If," Mao says, "you speak of Marxism apart from the special characteristics of China, it is only abstract and empty."³⁶ In other words, there were no universal truths; there was just a name to be taken on, and a separate ideology to be defined.

The idea of synthesis was not therefore grounded in philosophical judgment; instead, it was based upon an attitude which saw antinomies as completed subjects. Thus, Mao's move back to the celebration of Chinese history, the reversal of contradiction which occurs as the result of the lectures, is accompanied by a denial of a substantive universal Marxism, just as the reception of that Marxism had been conditioned by the rejection of Chinese culture. In this context, exclusivity both reflected and reinforced prejudice. This ossified thought--the undivided one as the achievement of the negation of the negation--was the cause of misunderstanding, since it was the product of an ideological approach to theory. Thus Mao's political education, which led to an insight into the political culture of Soviet philosophy, prevented his philosophical understanding from moving beyond immediacy. In turn, this sealed off interpretation from a more general determination.

The reduction of meaning to a series of formal statements, meant that the translated Soviet materials basically provided a vocabulary for what was envisioned as an essentially different theoretical approach. At the same time, re-definition could only be offered through a vocabulary which both acted as a spur to creativity, and insured at least the aura of allegiance.

In this regard, it should be obvious that no competent Soviet theorist would ever have agreed with Mao's argument concerning the unity of contradictions, and the role of negation in the dialectic. Mao's incoherence was certainly not in keeping with the character of Soviet thought. It is not at all surprising therefore, that when Wang Ming returns to China a few months after Mao's lectures, he comes with the instruction from Moscow that Mao's theoretical level be raised.³⁷ Though it is not absolutely clear that this dictum was in direct response to Mao's lectures, it does seem reasonable to assume that his major address would have been known in the Soviet Union soon after it was given. But even if the statement was not an immediate response, the judgment was correct: Mao's understanding of philosophy was insufficient.

The idea of clarification, of acquiring knowledge through interchange, was therefore denied by an ideological mind set that remained quite rigid. And this attitude continued to define Mao's theoretical articulations. For what unites both the lectures on dialectical materialism with the subsequent speech on sinification, is the fact that both were governed by strands of belief which had no philosophical underpinning. And this point is the key to an understanding of the domain of theory throughout this period.

In order to make this clear, it must first be emphasized that the failure of the lectures on the dialectic did not lead Mao to any critical re-appraisal of his understanding of philosophy. On the contrary, he continued to adhere to a literal interpretation of the dialectic. As he wrote in 1938, in his notes to Ai's Philosophy and Existence, "occurrence, development, and extinction are part of the process of a thing; they are not three processes. No doubt occurrence also expresses that which is above the stage of liquidation, and liquidation again expresses the stage below the stage of formation, but these are not three processes."³⁸ This, of course, is the same concept of the movement of the dialectic as the internal transition from one fully realized stage to another, which had shaped the lectures. And in this context, Mao holds to his characteristic description of negation as extinction, as liquidation.

Thus, in the late thirties, the structure of Mao's philosophical thought remained constant. The same form of reasoning which denied any real value to Chinese history, was the logic which denied any independent truth content to Marxism. It was only the variable which was to be negated or to be affirmed which changed. This persistent philosophical illiteracy meant that Mao's statements as to the meaning of the dialectic had to remain essentially private. And this is why, throughout the entire period of the thirties and forties, his philosophical remarks had no effect on the mode of theoretical analysis.

To understand this, it is important to distinguish between two intellectual relationships. The first is the relation between Mao's political thoughts as they

helped to define a political culture, and the second, is the relation between these political thoughts and the specific theoretical constructs which were used to understand and to interpret a political culture. The difference here is between a philosophy of politics which provided an ideological setting, and those philosophical categories and concepts which were used to find meaning for that ideological setting.

This does assume that though Mao's political line was, at this time, the referential substrate of discourse, this did not, indeed could not, entirely determine the speech acts of theorists. Put another way, a period of flux such as that which characterized China's politics up to the seizure of power, allowed Party philosophers and theorists real freedom in their choice of conceptual language; in the words that they used. (Obviously, this is restricted to a Marxist vocabulary.) And therefore, though in 1938 Mao does give expression to the idea of sinification, and though he later defines the new ideological era of "New Democracy," there was never a concomitant transformation in the constructs of theory. Instead, speculative understanding remained structured within frameworks which had been previously worked out. As will be shown in the next chapter, and hereafter, in the discussion of the criticism of Mao's concept of sinification, the arguments of philosophers such as Ai Siqi and those of political economists such as Shen Ziyuan, were stated through a form which remained consistent, while content expressed change.

Thus, the importance of Mao's lectures on contradiction in 1937, and the subsequent re-drafts, have to be seen in terms of how they affected his philosophy of politics; how they helped to determine his attitude toward Marxism, and the meaning of sinification. At the same time it may be recognized that though these statements were reprinted, and circulated, they had no appreciable effect. Those themes in the lectures which emphasized the particular, the idea which was celebrated in "On Contradiction," were here sedimented within an incoherent notion of contradiction. And therefore in order to serve as the principle for method, this

concept of specificity needed to be grounded within another basis. But it took almost fifteen years of fundamental excisions and additions for this to be realized. In turn, this not only explains why "On Contradiction" should never be read back on to Mao's earlier speech, but it also suggests that the importance of theories concerning the particular as the expression of synthesis, have to be found elsewhere; in those statements where he tried to define the political culture.

This is the significance of Mao's speech before the Sixth Plenum of the Central Committee in 1938. For it was here that he attempted to set out the ideology that was to govern reason, by explaining the meaning of sinification.

Today's China is an outgrowth of historic China. We are Marxist historicists; we must not mutilate history. From Confucius to Sun Yat-sen we must sum it up critically, and we must constitute ourselves the heirs of its precious legacy. Conversely, the assimilation of this legacy itself becomes a method that aids considerably in guiding the present great movement. A Communist is a Marxist internationalist, but Marxism must take on a national form before it can be of any practical effect. There is no such thing as abstract Marxism, but only concrete Marxism. What we call concrete Marxism is Marxism that has taken on a national form, that is, Marxism applied to the concrete struggle in the concrete conditions prevailing in China, and not Marxism abstractly used. If a Chinese Communist, who is part of the great Chinese people, bound to his people by his very flesh and blood, talks of Marxism apart from Chinese peculiarities, this Marxism is merely an empty abstraction. Consequently, the sinification of Marxism--that is to say, making certain that in all of its manifestations it is imbued with Chinese characteristics, using it according to Chinese peculiarities--becomes a problem that must be understood and solved by the whole party without delay. We must put an end to writing eight-legged essays on foreign models; there must be less repeating of empty and abstract refrains; we must discard our dogmatism and replace it by a new and vital Chinese style and manner, pleasing to the eye and to the ear of the common Chinese people.³⁹

This singular argument was clearly not based upon any idea of a dialectic. As was to be expected, there was here no conception of a creative adaptation of Marxism. Instead, the creation of a new identity, a Chinese Marxism, was to be the after-effect of the sublimation of all difference. Within this logic of cancellation, there was then no other content to be preserved save for a common vocabulary

regarding course, where meaning was to be exhausted through an exclusive interpretation.

It was to prevent such a deconstruction of theory that Ai Siqu writes an essay in 1940, criticizing the Maoist notion of sinification. In this context, it should be recalled that as with Mao, Chen Boda also believed that China's past offered a methodology for the present and future. And therefore Ai's concern was to move beyond these statements that were politically eristic and nationally misconceived, in order to try to set out the underlying concept, the idea, which would both clarify and act as the imperative for the process of assimilation. And this is expressed most artfully in his essay, "What Is Philosophy;" where he asserts, quite strikingly, that the necessary condition for a dialectical adaptation of Marxism lies in the prior recognition of genealogy: of the historical presuppositions as to its intent. Marxism, that is, must be understood through its own origins, as having arisen within a particular context--one which shaped and determined its categories. "The special point concerning the creation of Chinese Marxism and dialectical materialism is that its establishment has certainly not developed out of the criticism of China's intellectual legacy."⁴⁰ This is

because China's capitalist class, in its cultural revolution, did not achieve that level which would be sufficient to serve as the basis for the creation of Chinese Marxism and dialectical materialism. For Marxism, the product of the highest level of development, to come into being required such great capitalist philosophies as French socialism, Classical German Idealism, and Classical English Economy, to be the foundation of its growth. In China, however, there were no Chinese capitalists who, in their cultural revolution, seriously introduced these great philosophies, much less were there those who created these kinds of philosophies. . . . And therefore, China directly received Marxism and dialectical materialism from outside. . . . [As a consequence] it cannot be denied that Chinese Marxism and dialectical materialism were, in the beginning, extremely unsophisticated, for the proletariat did not completely develop its own revolutionary ideology in advance. Thus, when it was needed, they had to begin to study foreign things. And that which was studied inevitably was not at all well adapted, and inevitably was learnt somewhat superficially. This is what caused the many serious mistakes in the tactical leadership of the Chinese proletariat in the early stages of the revolution, and this is what caused Chinese Marxist theory, in all aspects of research, to have

such a low level of scholarship. It is for these reasons that today we promote the sinification of Marxism, and the sinification of dialectical materialism.⁴¹

Mao had also noted, in his lectures, that Marxism-Leninism had not developed out of China's cultural legacy. But this point which was tied to the entire dismissal of China's cultural history, had been superseded by the speech on sinification. And thus, Ai's reiteration of this argument in 1940 makes it clear that his understanding of the process of adaptation differed quite significantly from that of either Mao or Chen Boda. In this regard, his thesis was of crucial importance. For in stressing that the axioms of social theory had to be grounded historically, that the method of dialectics was to be used to unfold that which gave rise to and allowed for the development of its own essential content, Ai not only offered an alternative concept to meaning, but in so doing he also revealed the contradictions inherent in Mao's particular understanding of synthesis. In effect, Ai was refuting one version of reconciliation, in order to prepare the idea of how to go about realizing another.

Ai's definition of Marxism as a method, was based upon the understanding that the purpose of dialectical and historical materialism lay in its ability to show how men produce, and can create, their own history in circumstances not of their own choosing. As he maintained as early as 1935, its critical function was to analyze an historical moment, through, in part, the recognition that consciousness had a dual determination: that as it could purposefully alter its objective environment, so was its activity ultimately linked to, a reflection of, a specific process of production. And this was true irrespective of the level of conceptual abstraction. Therefore, what he now argues, is that the effectiveness of Marxism, a theory which aims not only at analysis, but also at the supersession of an existing moment, necessarily depends upon a continuous reflection as to the origins of ground; the lineaments of genealogy. He makes it clear that the possibility of integrating the intention of Marxism within a specific practice, has as its condition

that, that Marxism become the object of an historical and dialectical critique. Its realization and development, or, in its Chinese context, its sinification, supposes the critical analysis of its past formations (the various historical forms of its idea) as a determined determinant within a changing totality. And this of course is why he emphasizes that the poverty of Chinese Marxism must be understood in terms of its relation to the weakness of developing Chinese capitalism. Because in specifying one source, by bringing out contrast, he suggests--indeed demands--an understanding of that which identifies comparison, the genus of theory.

This is precisely what Mao does not imply in his conception of sinification. For, his notion that Chinese history constitutes a value in itself, a methodology to guide the revolution, divides the concept of the necessary historical concretion of Marxism from history; they become two distinct values. And therefore, their logical connection only becomes realized in the re-appearance of the dialectic as an invariant process which is then either grafted on to Chinese history, ". . . to make certain that in all of its manifestations it is imbued with Chinese characteristics,"⁴² or, as in Chen's argument, is then re-derived as a methodological component of Chinese history. This reduces the concept of the dialectic to a mutable categorical instrument, whose purpose is defined by a given thesis--it becomes the corollary of a purely particularistic approach. Thus, from the standpoint of Marxist theory as Ai had defined it, Mao's reasoning on sinification exacerbated those problems which Ai had attempted to resolve. Instead of providing direction, by making clear the need for an increased critical awareness of the tenets of Western Marxism, Mao railed against the returned students, who though "ignorant of anything their own, yet hold on to Greek and foreign tales." And rather than recognize that the "responsibility to create something new," needed itself to be analyzed historically and dialectically, Mao saw Marxism holistically, and hence stressed the "precious qualities of Chinese history."⁴³ Thus, other than from his own knowledge and

beliefs, Mao provided no clear or consistent basis for the Chinese Revolution. This gave a legitimacy to the ossification of political theory.

In this context, it is important here to look at Ai's writings throughout this period, and to see them as an alternative statement regarding the philosophy of Chinese Marxism. As such, his argument reveals itself both as theoretical consideration and as representative type: a substantive intellectual account, and, in this, a signifier of a method for adaptation. For, what is striking about Ai's essays at this time, is their integration of Marx's basic philosophical stance. And this is most evident in Ai's discussion of Marx's analysis of German Idealism. For, the point of "What Is Philosophy," which begins with an overview of Marx's own critical development, was not only to emphasize that Marxist dialectics begins in the supersession of all forms of idealism, but also to suggest (in a somewhat concealed fashion) that Marx's unveiling of the conception of history which underlined German Idealism, implied the necessity of a paralleled response by Chinese Marxist theorists to the idea of history underlining the notion of sinification. In other words, as Marx recognized that, "German Idealism was the ideal prolongation of German history,"⁴⁴ that it was the abstraction of the state, the fiction which the state imagined itself to be, so Chinese Marxist philosophers needed to recognize that Mao's and Chen's notion of sinification idealized Chinese history, created out of it an historical myth of essence. And thus, what distinguished these conceptions from that of someone such as Ye Qing was primarily the use of source; the juxtaposition of folk and mandarin culture. Therefore, just as Marx analyzed the effect of the antinomial character of the Hegelian legacy upon the later development of German Idealism, by showing how, on the one side, the attempt by Left Hegelians to realize the positive premise of critique (which began in their criticism of religion) was limited by their failure to understand the materialist basis of their philosophical thought, and how, on the other side, it led to the effort to negate all philosophy,

through "pragmatic" rejection,⁴⁵ so Ai stresses that the critique of Confucianism, the positive postulate of sinification, could neither be actualized through the hypostatization of Chinese Marxism as a dual abstraction: that of an invariant dialectic and that of Chinese history (each abstract in itself); nor could Marxism simply be dismissed as ill-suited to the reality of China.

Most importantly, Ai's continuous emphasis upon the nature of critique, its historical and materialist presuppositions, suggests that he had grasped the implications of Marx's insight into the relationship of theory to practice contained in the "Introduction to the Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." For, it was there that Marx argued that philosophy could only become a material force to the degree that it expressed the real needs of the people. Its revolutionary character was determined, in part, by its ability both to create a desire for liberation, and to provide the conceptual understanding as to the basis and reason for that desire. And thus, Ai begins his article on sinification by quoting Marx's famous statement, "as philosophy finds its materialist weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its intellectual weapons in philosophy."⁴⁶ Moreover, it is in the "Contribution to the Critique" that Marx emphasizes that philosophical analysis can only be translated into revolutionary praxis, if there is a mutual correspondence between theory and practice. Theory, that is, must find its reflection in the material needs of man; it must find in its historical moment, the material conditions from which the possibility of its own supersession may be realized. "It is not enough," Marx says, "that thought should seek its own actualization; actuality must itself strive towards thought."⁴⁷ Accordingly, Marx argues that if there is no congruence between material need and theoretical demand, then theory can only be expressed in revolutionary praxis as a negative political ought: as that which attempts to resolve the "universal" problem of emancipation from the partial standpoint of politics. This, however, inverts the relationship between state and society; for, without a sufficient material basis, the direction of a

revolution, and that of post-revolutionary construction becomes dependent upon the imposition of theory, as political thought, upon civil society. Theory, that is, must re-order civil society to fit the image and consequent requirements of its own political categories. Therefore, Marx makes it clear that the state cannot become abstracted from the dialectical concept of a social totality, to be re-designated the sole agent of supersession. "What is utopian," he says, is "the merely political revolution, the revolution which would leave the pillars of the edifice standing."⁴⁸

Marx's discussion of the pre-conditions for revolution in Germany appeared to be directed toward developing in the consciousness of the proletariat a demand for basic democratic rights. As he assumed the existence of the materialist basis necessary for the actualization of philosophy, he therefore focused his analysis upon those elements within the superstructure which created a myth out of the state, and reified consciousness. His conception of that condition of economic development suitable for socialist revolution changed dramatically, once he had understood the process of capitalist production, and the manifold meaning of "surplus-value." While in his later works, the notion of that level of productive development necessary for socialism remained ambiguous, nevertheless it is clear that he had grounded his philosophical concerns within economic presuppositions by emphasizing the ultimate determination of the productive forces. Hence, Ai's writings may be seen, in part, as an attempt to define the philosophical standpoint of Capital, so as to create in China not only an understanding of the meaning and use of Marxist theory, but also to emphasize the distance between the demands of that theory and the reality of Chinese practice.

To Ai, the supersession of idealism in China merely signifies the beginning of the development of the dual materialist pre-conditions for socialist revolution: dialectical awareness, and economic productivity. Thus socialism becomes a distant premise; one in which the creation of 'true' consciousness is postponed by the imposed reconciliation of state and society. In this, social and economic growth

turn into the predicate of state construction. The subject of movement, the underpinnings of the transition to socialism, shift to another level of determinacy. And this causes an antinomy in the relationship of theory to practice. For here, theory must function both as political thought and as a process of enlightenment: the guide for the state, and that which mediates state and society. It must, that is, act as the agent of that which it must also oppose: the sublimation of all forms of social life within the political sphere. Thus, Ai's point of contrast, the emphasis in his writings on the methods and precepts of Marxism, on the dialectic between base and superstructure (specifically, his argument that there are times when the relations of production can truly hinder the development of the productive forces), and on the "organizing" role of ideology, was designed to derive, from an explanation of the fundamentals of Chinese and Western Marxism, the conscious recognition, in state and society, that in a transitional period, philosophy must exist both as a theory of praxis, and, as a theory in practice. As praxis, as a particularistic method, it turns the contingent into the immediately necessary by justifying the demand for the seizure of power. As a theory of praxis, however, it criticizes this very demand and its expression, by grounding this within a teleological projection of Marxist necessity; within, that is, a more universal and materialist conception of economic attainment. In this sense, the transition toward socialism in China becomes that stage when philosophy can be superseded; when, the ought of revolution becomes identical to the promise of emancipation.

Ai's use of Marxism as both the subject and object of critique, and inferred from this, his argument that theory must heuristically deny its own requisite concretion, reveals an asymptotic character to Chinese Marxism: the fact that its own definition could prevent its full integration within its contemporary practice. In this, idealism is superseded only in part; what remains is the veil, if not the essence, of metaphysics. Thus theory becomes its own abstraction, its strength and meaning

determined by the extent to which its content is both preserved and cancelled through the progressive development of its political form.

The coherence of this theoretical definition should not, however, conceal the contradiction inherent in its dual determination. For, there is no necessary complement between the tasks of political and social enlightenment: the idea and working out of that which is believed to be "progressive", is merely relative to its source. The tension between the dichotomous position and function of theory (that which is self-advanced, and that which is advanced for it), and that between its form and content, demands a constant and creative resolution of a concept, which can, and almost inevitably does, conflict with the exigencies of politics. This is clearly illustrated in the dispute over the meaning of sinification. Ai's argument not only had as its presupposition that which it was required to struggle against--the recognition by the leadership that the application of Marxist categories implied only the possibility of their future realization--but, in turn, acceptance of this meant that philosophy could not legitimize Mao in his fight with the 'returned students'. It could not justify Mao's contention that his unique knowledge of China was the singular requisite for revolutionary leadership. Though Ai's thesis responded at many levels to those ideas underlying Soviet philosophy, and though he laid a basis for the conceptualization of a Chinese road to socialism, nevertheless, as a theory of praxis, his work contradicted in theory Maoist practice. Yet, at the same time, the role of theory as praxis was dependent upon the primacy of Mao. For if Mao exaggerated the importance of Chinese history in developing a course for the socialist revolution, the arguments of the 'returned students' were even more ill-suited to this task, as they were mere echoes of Soviet policy. Hence, to preserve its hermeneutic value, philosophy as political thought had to co-exist both as theory and as polemic. It had to encourage and steadfastly support the political principles of Mao Zedong. Here, the antinomic position of theory was reflected, and as such, was both nullified and heightened by the common acceptance of Leninism. The

model of Leninist technique, that apparently most suited to developing the organization and consciousness of discipline, became the shared focus for Party intellectuals and the leadership. It was the Party, as the sole instrument of power, which, Ai explained, "grasped the correct scientific revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism," and which was thus, "able to give the proletarian struggle the correct direction."⁴⁹

Hence, theory came to exist as a dual method, Marxist-Leninist, and it became characterized, from the standpoint of Ai's previous definition, by a praxis of contradiction. For, it celebrated principles of organization, the philosophy of which (Lenin's conception of epistemology and dialectics) it had denied it in its formation. In this sense, Ai's philosophy had gone full circle: his explanation as to the meaning of Marxist dialectics, in contra-distinction to that proposed by either Engels or Lenin, had begun in the analysis of the dialectical legacy of theory and method in Hegel, and in particular in the emphasis upon the impossibility of separating method from its conceptual precepts. Yet here, it was precisely this methodology of division which became the rationale for his interpretation of Chinese Marxism. Thus, at the beginning of the new period of "New Democracy" the meaning of dialectics, and the definition of Marxist categories, remained open-ended. Marxism was still a rubric for theoretical ambiguity and political opposition.

Notes

- 1 Joshua A. Fogel, Ai Ssu-chi's Contribution to the Development of Chinese Marxism, Harvard Contemporary China Series no. 4, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 61.
- 2 Stuart Schram, The Thought of Mao Tse-tung, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 62.
- 3 Nick Knight (ed.), Mao Zedong on Dialectical Materialism, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1990, p. 161.
- 4 Schram, The Thought of Mao Tse-tung, p. 68.
- 5 Ibid., p. 139.
- 6 For a discussion of the general concept of the negation of the negation see: Gustav A. Wetter, Dialectical Materialism, pp. 355-366, and the introduction to Theodor W. Adorno, Hegel: Three Studies, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.
- 7 Ai Siqi, "Guanyu xingshi luoji yu bianzheng luoji" (Concerning the between formal and dialectical logic"), Ai Siqi Wenji, vol. 1, p. 302.
- 8 Ibid., p. 303.
- 9 I am grateful to Professor Stuart R. Schram who graciously provided me with this source material.
- 10 "Bianzhangfa weiwulun jiaocheng," in Mao Zedong zhhexue pizhuji ("Annotations on A Course on Dialectical Materialism," M. Shirokov and A. Aizenberg et al., trans. Li Da and Lei Zhongjian), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, p. 88.
- 11 Ibid., p. 118.
- 12 Ibid., p. 79.
- 13 Takeuchi Minoru (ed.), Mao Zedong ji bujuan (Supplements to the Collected Writings of Mao Zedong), Tokyo: Sososha, 1983-1986, vol. 5, p. 275.
- 14 Mao Zedong, "Ai Zhu 'Zhhexue he shenghuo' zhailu" ("Extracts from Ai's Philosophy and Existence") Zhongguo Zhhexue, August 1979, vol. 1, p. 29.

In passing it is interesting to note that Ai's view that not all difference was contradiction was quite similar to Deborin's argument that contradiction was not necessarily present at the beginning of every process. By 1938, however, when Ai was writing, this was a discredited thesis in the Soviet Union. It had

been superseded by Mitin's insistence that contradiction was ever present, and all encompassing. Thus, it makes no sense for Joshua Fogel to assert that Ai simply patterned himself after Mitin, by adopting his arguments. On the critical questions as to the nature of the dialectic and the character of the Soviet economy, Ai clearly stood apart from the established position in the Soviet Union. Joshua Fogel, Ai Ssu-chi's Contribution to the Development of Chinese Marxism, pp. 86-87.

- 15 Quoted in Raymond F. Wylie, The Emergence of Maoism: Ch'en Po-ta and the Search for Chinese Theory 1935-1945, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980, p. 80.
- 16 Knight (ed.), Mao Zedong on Dialectical Materialism, p. 191.
- 17 Ibid., p. 191.
- 18 The distinction between meaning and reference is drawn from Frege's seminal essay "On Sense and Reference," reprinted in A. W. Moore (ed.), Meaning and Reference, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 23-43.
- 19 For the belief that the 'unity of contradictions' and the 'unity of opposites' are simply two forms of the same expression, see Knight's introduction to Mao Zedong on Dialectical Materialism. It is this neglect of categorical difference which allows Knight to create a thematic identity between "On Contradiction" and the lectures of 1937. In this regard, he follows the editors of Mao's Selected Works in creating a false history to Mao's political thought.

Raymond Wylie has also suggested that these lectures provided the philosophical outline for Mao's theory of sinification. To make this point, Wylie relies solely on the lecture concerned with the general criticism of idealism. It is in the principle of the unity of thought and existence that he finds the basis for Mao's insistence that Marxism be rooted in the reality of China's material circumstance. This is incorrect; Mao never expressed his ideas on sinification through the philosophical critique of idealism.

What Wylie does not understand is that Marxism is a social theory; it demands concretion. The requirement of location says nothing however about the character of the process of adaptation. The relationship between the general theory which has revealed the truth that all ideas must ultimately be linked to a given process of production, and the specific situation in which this truth is to be understood, is not defined through a denial of idealism. For by itself, the basic criticism of idealism simply introduces the subject of Marxist concern. Indeed, at this level any statement in China concerning identity was almost a tautology: to be a Marxist in China is to be a Chinese Marxist. And therefore, as there was here no principle of necessity other than that associated with a declaration of stance, all conclusions as to meaning were open. This explains why it is in this lecture on idealism that Mao first explains that the reception of Marxism required the denial of China's philosophical heritage. This was the

requirement of Marxist condition before the explanation of the condition of the categories for that condition could be made clear. Philosophically, sinification could therefore only be expressed through an interpretation of the dialectic. It was only through an understanding of contradiction that the activity of adaptation could be explained. And this is why Chinese philosophers spent so much time discussing the categories of the dialectic.

Wylie's mistake is to read back the later complaint against emptiness in Marxism onto the earlier criticism of idealist philosophy, in order to stress that Marxism had to be rooted. Had he understood the social context of Marxist theory, then he would have recognized that since Marxism has to be grounded, the criticism of idealist philosophies could not in itself lead to a statement on sinification.

- 20 Stanley Rosen, "Logic and Dialectic," in Stanley Rosen, The Ancients and the Moderns, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 142.
- 21 Knight (trans.), Mao Zedong on Dialectical Materialism, p. 109.
- 22 Mao Zedong zhexue pizhuji, p. 124.
- 23 Ibid., p. 80.
- 24 Ibid., p. 175.
- 25 Stuart R. Schram (ed.), Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974, p. 226.
- 26 Ibid., p. 227.
- 27 Schram, The Thought of Mao Tse-tung, p. 138.
- 28 Ibid., pp. 138-143.
- 29 Li Da, Shehui dagang (Outline of Sociology), 1938 text reprinted in Mao Zedong zhexue pizhuji, p. 248.
- 30 Ibid., p. 246.
- 31 Ibid., p. 246.
- 32 For a discussion of the possible influence of Shehui dagang on Mao's understanding of the dialectic see Knight's introduction to Mao Zedong on Dialectical materialism, pp. 56-62.
- 33 Mao Zedong zhexue pizhuji, pp. 247-249.
- 34 See, for example, Gregor Benton, "The Second Wang Ming Line (1939)," China Quarterly, 61 (March 1975), pp. 61-94, and Lyman Van Slyke, "The

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- Chinese Communist Movement 1937-1945," The Cambridge History of China, 1986, vol. 13, Chapter 12, especially pp. 615-620.
- 35 Mao Zedong, "Second Preface to 'Village Investigations,'" in Boyd Compton (ed.), Mao's China Party Reform Documents, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1952, p. 52.
- 36 Ibid., p. 63.
- 37 Gregor Benton, "The Second Wang Ming Line," p. 77.
- 38 Mao Zedong zhexue pizhuji, pp. 383-384.
- 39 Quoted in Schram, The Thought of Mao Tse-tung, p. 70.
- 40 Ai Siqu, "Zhexue shi shenma" ("What Is Philosophy"), Zhongguo wenhua, no. 6, vol. 1, 1940, p. 32.
- 41 Ibid., p. 32.
- 42 Stuart R. Schram, The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung, p. 70.
- 43 Mao Zedong, "The Reconstruction of Our Studies," in Boyd Compton (ed.), Mao's China Party Reform Documents, p. 62.
- 44 Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: An Introduction," Joseph O'Malley (ed.), Karl Marx, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 135.
- 45 Ibid., p. 136.
- 46 Ibid., p. 142.
- 47 Ibid., p. 138.
- 48 Ibid., p. 139.
- 49 Ai Siqu, "Zhexue shi shenma," p. 27.

CHAPTER 3

THEORIES OF SOVEREIGNTY: THE CONSTRUCTS OF PRACTICE

The asymptotic character of theory was in a sense the predicate or the signification of a more radical problematic concerning the definition of revolutionary subject. For though it was clear to Mao, to Ai, and to Chen Boda, that the concept of a 'sinification' of Marxism was both logical and necessary, the precise meaning as to the nature of this concretion remained somewhat ambiguous. Ai, for example, had argued that the legitimation and content of Chinese Marxism presupposed a self-conscious acknowledgment as to its antinomic basis: there had to be a recognition of the identity of identity and difference. Yet this rather sophisticated idea that what remained in the dialectic of praxis was a referential aspect, and that in the interest of preservation, theory was dependent upon the arrestation and continuity of a specific moment, was not only perhaps an impossible formulation (both intellectually and politically) but also was not necessarily suited to or reflective of its circumstance. Put another way, did not the period require a novel understanding, a reinterpretation of analytic constructs: theories of a 'new' bourgeoisie, a 'new' form of capitalism, or the recognition of a working class dictatorship? Could the categories of Marxism not be exhausted through the mediation of particularity? But if they were, what would be left of their original intention, what would be (and here we come full circle) the basis for critique?

Then again the question might be ill-posed, for it assumes (or in terms of Chinese perception it follows Ai's suggestion) that there was or should be a conscious distinction between Marxism and Leninism. But if instead, Marxism was understood (with or without reflection) through its Leninist interpretation, if the operative equation--Marxism-Leninism--was truly unbalanced, then the analysis of Chinese discussions as to the substrate of their theory (as to what they believed)

would relate far more to Lenin's precepts and their influence, if any, upon later Soviet theory and practice; would, that is, relate to questions as to whether or not either or both were accepted as prescriptive in China, than it would be concerned with a tripartite constellation of intellectual sources.

It is clear that irrespective of Chinese arguments, an attempt to understand the dialectic between concepts and categories supposes a consideration of its referential aspects. But equally as important, it should be made clear that at this level, a study of the form and content of Chinese Marxism, of its theoretical center of gravity, must take into account the political mediation of this intellectual sphere. It must, that is, consider the extent to which the basis of theory lies segmented within a political hierarchy, and thus the degree to which it is affected as a determined determinant.

This is not meant merely in a broad sense, as the presumption that an historical moment assumes its own 'relevant' articulation; rather, more specifically, the idea here is that a philosophy of theory and practice is somehow (and this, of course, remains to be explored) predefined or structured by a given policy as to social and economic construction. In other words, despite the dialectic between theory and practice, a political line appears to possess an anterior sovereignty; one which imposes the parameters to the choice of discursive formulations. Once a line has been declared or altered, thought, as an ideological force, must incorporate or re-adapt itself to it. This is not to imply that there is no continuity within discontinuity, that there are either clear epistemological breaks within the constructs of thought, or that there is a correspondence or identity between theoretical and political change such that the former may simply be decoded from the later. What it does however suggest, is that these concepts do not necessarily anticipate within themselves political movement. There was little in the early writings of Ai or Chen, for example, which suggested Mao's "On New Democracy."

This underscores the dilemma of location. For though it was neither Ai's nor the leadership's intention that theory 'in itself' should not at the same time reveal a theory of and for praxis, the supersession of political philosophy's seemingly contingent nature was dependent upon a definition of content, and hence of role, that had yet to be made.

In 1940, the inchoate situation of theory mirrored the general character of its historical period. And, baldly put, the quality of inception distinguished the transitory years up to and including the attainment of power. Indeed, without minimizing the dramatic alterations which had occurred in the period between 1940 to 1949, by 1949 the fundamental policies directing practice were still in large part those which Mao had set out, somewhat discretely, in 1940--China was in a "New Democratic" stage. Thus to take a small leap forward, and to resume with the beginning period of state control, is, perhaps, justified not only because the problematic of political philosophy had not as yet been resolved, but also because the focus of concern is rather better appreciated when the political axis was more firmly rooted. It also follows that an understanding of the condition of theory, of its position and function, requires a prior, but brief, discussion as to the primary aspects of its coordinating line: what Mao meant by "New Democracy."

1

"New Democracy" referred to what Mao saw as the first stage of a revolutionary process which was to prepare the material groundwork for the transition to socialism. Politically, this meant that while fundamental responsibility for state construction lay with the working class and its vanguard, the Chinese Communist Party, the direction of practice was to be shared through the exercise of a joint dictatorship of all progressive or revolutionary classes. This included, "the proletariat, the peasantry, the intellegensia, and the other sections of the petty-

bourgeoisie," as well as those members of the bourgeoisie who were willing to participate in a "national and democratic revolution."¹ In turn, this movement was to find its economic complement in a policy of a mixed economy, where private property and capitalist production were allowed as long as neither dominated the people's livelihood. At the same time, large estate capital was to be redistributed to the peasants, who were thereby encouraged voluntarily to use this to form agricultural co-operatives. Basically, the overall policy was that of 'regulation of capital and the equalization of land ownership' under the guidance of a state structure adapted to the needs of an underdeveloped country. It was a type of organizational theory and practice which differed from that which had characterized Soviet political practice in 1917; and was instead, as Mao argued, singular and essential. "During this period, a third form of state must be adopted . . . this form suits a certain historical period and is therefore transitional; nevertheless, it is a form which is necessary and cannot be dispensed with."²

It should be noted that while the nomenclature "New Democracy" was apparently original to Mao, almost all of its theses were not. The notions of a 'bourgeois-democratic state', of a 'united front', or a reliance upon the peasantry, etc., were strategies which had earlier been articulated either in Soviet or in Comintern pronouncements.³ Moreover, in regard to the program of redistribution of land and the need for a sympathetic drive toward agricultural association, there were aspects of Mao's argument which recalled some of Marx's formulations. As Marx wrote in his "Conspectus on Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy,"

where he has not disappeared and been replaced by the agricultural wage-labourer . . . the proletariat . . . must as government take measures through which the peasant finds his condition immediately improved, so as to win him over to the revolution; measures which will at least provide the possibility of easing the transition from private ownership of land to collective ownership, so that the peasant arrives at this of his own accord, from economic reasons. It must not hit the peasant over the head.⁴

The accent in "New Democracy" was not, however, upon its cosmopolitan antecedents; rather, more parochially, it was upon providing a predicate to the concept of 'Sinification'. Mao's intention was to justify his claim to power by presenting his policies as uniquely appropriate to the situation in China. This was the significance of the 'third form' and of the attitude toward the peasantry. For here, he not only established a content to the form of an idea, but also, in so doing, he drew the boundary, as it were, between his supporters and those who identified their interests with those of Moscow. The latter were, Mao said, Marxists who failed to recognize that "Chinese culture should have its own form, its national form."⁵ Men who 'made a fetish of formulas' through a neglect of the basic tenet of revolution, which was that the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism required its synthesis with Chinese practice, and therefore for whom there was "no room . . . in the ranks of the Chinese revolution."⁶

This stress upon particularity of course did not imply a complete anti-Soviet orientation. Instead, the independence of Chinese theory and practice was to be understood within the broader context of international solidarity. In other words, a distinction was drawn between Soviet policy in general and its value for China. This is why Mao argued repeatedly for the necessity of an alliance with this 'home of socialism'.

Once the conflict between the socialist Soviet Union and the imperialist powers grows sharper, China will have to take her stand, on one side or the other . . . if alliance with Russia is sacrificed for the sake of imperialism, the word revolutionary will have to be expunged from the "Three People's Principles" which will then become reactionary.⁷

But if "New Democracy" was for Mao a felicitous expression uniting and balancing the interrelated concerns of theory and practical politics, what remained unresolved was the primary question of basis. Despite the use of a novel phrasing, the relationship between the general and the specific was still, at best, ambiguously defined. Mao's 'third form', for example, was advanced as archetypal for countries

whose revolutions occurred in more backward economic conditions. "Each of these revolutions," he says, "will necessarily have specific characteristics of their own, but these will be minor variations on a general theme."⁸ This, however, merely begged the question as to the character of this theme: was this basic movement, this specific generality, to be understood dialectically, in terms of the mutual transformation of universal truths? Were the specific categories to be understood as the new orthodoxy of Marxism-Leninism? Or, was Chinese theory and practice, and that of the other underdeveloped nations, somehow to be seen as an intellectual fugue, as the flexible and independent middle within a complex of previously articulated precepts? And here, even in those situations where the emphasis upon particularity was seemingly predominant, the meaning of inheritance remained a problem. In "On Coalition Government," for example, Mao wrote, "Russian history has shaped the Russian system . . . similarly Chinese history will shape a Chinese system for the present stage; and for a long time to come there will exist in China a particular form of political and state power."⁹ But what was unclear was whether or not this sense of distinctiveness was to act as the conscious parameter to the process of integration, or whether it would be the inevitable characteristic of a superseding praxis.

The difficulty is that Mao's writings at this time lacked a sense of theoretical architecture. And the reason for this lies, perhaps, in the conceptual framework underlying Marxist commitment. For the formula of sinification, the statement that it was the synthesis of the universal and the particular, appears to have been the most suitable form of expression for what was substantively a rather different idea, one in which particular posited in and for itself its conscious object. In this, the notion of mediation, of synthesis, was translated as a concept of acquisition. It seems that in Mao's view Marxism-Leninism comprised a form of technical abstractions which provided the concretion for statements of content. "The arrow of Marxism-Leninism," he says, "must be used to hit the target of the Chinese

revolution. If it were otherwise, why would we want to study Marxism-Leninism? . . . Marxism-Leninism has no beauty, nor has it any mystical value. It is only extremely useful."¹⁰ What is missing here is the recognition of the dialectic which occurs, irrespective of intention, between form and content. The understanding that concepts could not simply be imported or managed without a concomitant transformation in the mode of thought. Instead, Mao adheres to a belief in unaffected permanence, to a notion of an inviolate essence. And thus the real principle of 'Sinification of Marxism': "that is to say, making certain that in all of its manifestations it is imbued with Chinese characteristics using it according to these particularities"¹¹ seemingly rested upon the mistaken notion, as Ai had pointed out, that it was comparatively easy to 'Sinify' the language and logic of another system (or other systems).

The distance between statement and desire did create, however, a space for theory. The possibilities for a definition as to the meaning and relationship between constructs received an implicit level of assurance in the imprecision of Mao's theses. There was, in other words, a legitimate scope for discourse. And in this intellectual haze nationalism was not imposed; rather it was a philosophic axiom. But to understand how Party intellectuals attempted to provide a structure for theoretical location, it is first necessary to discuss the other complex within their ideological constellation, the arguments of Soviet theorists concerning the meaning of a "New Democracy."

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, one of the immediate concerns among Soviet theoreticians was to provide an analysis of the countries of Eastern Europe. In this regard, the first notable contributions were those of the economist Eugene Varga, and the law academician I. P. Trainin.¹²

Varga's basic argument was that these countries were historically unique. They were neither dictatorships of the proletariat nor that of the bourgeoisie; rather

they were orders of a 'third form', "New Democracies," led by the working class in alliance with progressive national elements. Arising out of liberation and resistance struggles, they were in the process of preparing the material and political groundwork for the transition to socialism through the requisite means: the eradication of feudal forms of ownership, the nationalization of banks and industry, and the encouragement of voluntary co-operativization. Though the economy was mixed, and private property guaranteed, Varga believed that since state power was controlled by the working class the eventual dominance of the state sector was assured. Here his concern was with the content of power and not its form; indeed, he declared that working class rule could be preserved even within the structures of a parliamentary democracy.¹³

There were two practical reasons for this assertion. The first was that he was attempting to find general principles which were applicable to a variety of constitutional forms. Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia were, for example, parliamentary republics, whereas Yugoslavia was a federal republic. Second, Varga was intent upon emphasizing this aspect of particularity, since Soviet foreign policy was directed toward propagating ideas of national identities and specific paths to social and economic construction. It was in this spirit that the Czech President Eduard Bernes had said,

the Soviet Union and the Russian Communists themselves acknowledge . . . that the transformation of a liberal democracy to its higher degree--to a socializing democracy should and can come about . . . by means of reasonable evolution in accordance with the national economic, social geographic, ethical and juridical conditions of the national societies concerned.¹⁴

At the same time, implicit in Varga's thesis was the notion that in this kind of transitional economy there could not be a full or complete correspondence between the relations and forces of production. The different modes of production which characterized these economies--the co-existence of public and private sectors, the vestiges of feudalism etc.--meant that the crucial question was that of who

controlled the means of production. And according to Varga it was the working class. Because of this he concluded that irrespective of the state of the productive forces, working class control assured the mitigation of antagonistic contradictions. Though class struggle continued, since the bourgeoisie and the large land-owning classes continued to exist, he assumed that due to the 'aid and advice of the Soviet Union', and to the fact that the means of production were 'in the hand of the people', political strife would be resolved through economic progress.¹⁵

In this faith in state power, Varga was expressing an idea which some of his contemporaries (Marr, Notkin, and Yaroshenko) were also beginning to develop, and to which Stalin would later respond. But the most important point here, is that Varga was attempting to construct a Marxist theory of and for revolutionary societies where political change had preceded the development of industrialization. And in so doing, his argument that the state could direct the economy to the extent that it could absorb contradictions, his denial of future violence resulting from the development of the productive forces, salvaged a justification for the theories of practice of these pre-socialist societies. And in this, Varga had articulated, to some degree, the unstated assumption guiding all these "New Democracies." Moreover, in his adoption of the 'third form', he had at least offered the possibility of a more complete analysis as to what was meant by the transition to socialism in what were unique circumstances.

Trainin's argument followed in most respects that of Varga. Where they disagreed was over the phrase "New Democracy." Trainin believed that this could only be applied to Soviet democracy--as a characteristic distinguishing it from bourgeois democracy--and that therefore these Eastern European countries were democracies of a 'special type'.¹⁶ Most importantly, as with Varga, Trainin felt that what distinguished these democracies was the predominance of working class leadership within the transitional form of National Front Coalitions. These broadly based movements of 'internal liberation', which were allied to the Soviet Union,

were seen, in turn, as possessing the sufficient conditions for a gradual transition to socialism. And this novel situation meant that it was unnecessary for these states either to adopt a Soviet type of political system or to have to engage in a Soviet type of violent revolution. This did not suggest the disappearance of class struggle, but it did imply, on Trainin's part, a strong belief in the ability of the working class to manage economic construction; particularly in relation to the countryside. For along with Varga, Trainin stressed that since the peasantry basically supported the state, there would be no serious economic disruptions in the countryside. And it was on this issue that they were both criticized.

The economist Faberov, for example, charged that Trainin had "mistakenly portrayed that vicious and most numerous exploiting class, the kulaks, as having 'dispersed among the people,' whereas in reality the kulak class was still an important force exerting fierce opposition to the people's authority." In addition, because Trainin had not emphasized an attack on the capitalist elements in the cities and the villages, his ideas "weakened the class militancy of the working people."¹⁷

Faberov's critique was part of a shift in interpretation by Soviet theorists, which followed a new line of emphasis on the similarity between these new or special democracies--now referred to as People's Democracies--and the Soviet Union. As the Doctor of Law Mankovsky put it,

the Soviet state and the People's Democratic state are variations within the confines of the single socialist type of state. The Soviet state is carrying out the transition from socialism to communism; the People's Democracies are carrying out the transition from capitalism to socialism."¹⁸

Indeed, as he said elsewhere,

views which repudiate the proletarian character of a People's Democracy, and regard it as a middle path between capitalism and socialism, as a special type of state as opposed to a socialist state, are completely alien to Marxism-Leninism.¹⁹

Thus it was argued that what distinguished these regimes was that power was solely in the hands of the working class; that they had achieved this position through the aid and collaboration of the Soviet Union; and that further, the continued and correct exercise of this power was dependent upon a recognition both of this and of the overriding principle that a successful transition to socialism meant adherence to a Soviet model. To oppose this was deviationist, nationalistic, and could only, as was tirelessly pointed out, aid imperialism. "The very assertion," Faberov says,

of the possibility of building socialism exclusively by a country's own forces and in its own special way . . . while a bitter struggle is taking place between the two fundamental groups in the contemporary world is a sure incarnation of nationalism, which was and remains the mortal enemy of socialism.²⁰

Though the political form of these People's Democracies differed from that of the Soviet Union, the character of their state power was now to be understood in terms of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Accordingly, as their primary task was to build a socialist economy through the liquidation of capitalism, the principle of virulent class struggle was reintroduced. And here Stalin's earlier prescription that as socialism drew near class antagonisms intensified, became the leitmotif for a new critical understanding. "A pattern of development in the transitional period," Faberov asserted,

is the uninterrupted sharpening, not fading, of the class struggle. The more socialist construction develops in the People's Republics, the fiercer becomes the opposition of the exploiting classes, and consequently, the sharper becomes the class struggle.²¹

It is important, however, not to over-exaggerate the role and function of this idea of antagonism in these revised Soviet interpretations. For though it was basic to the justification for and definition of a dictatorship of the proletariat in Soviet orthodoxy, this thesis of class struggle was, at the same time, balanced by a notion of gradualness within the category of transition. The movement to stress identity, made manifest in the argument that People's Democracies were fulfilling the

function of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and were not as Varga had claimed, unique political forms, required a predication in the principle of continued class antagonism. Yet, without contradiction, this idea was also paired with other normative concepts, so that Party intellectuals were consciously able to reincorporate the statements of Varga and Trainin regarding the suppositions for a relatively peaceful transformation of agriculture, and for the possibility of avoiding bloodshed in general thanks to Soviet support. Thus, economists such as Kazantsev and Pukhlov argued that collectivization could only be accomplished in a slow and voluntary fashion:]

it is necessary that the peasantry, through its own experience, become convinced of the advantages of large-scale collective farming . . . and that a broad movement arise . . . among the masses of the peasantry for voluntary entry into collective farms,²²

it must be borne in mind that the collective farms cannot be forcibly imposed on the peasants;²³

while the Hungarian leader Jozef Revai noted, that "thanks to the fact that we can rely on the Soviet Union, and so can be spared from civil war, the foremost function of our dictatorship of the proletariat is a task of economic and cultural construction."²⁴

It is rather misleading therefore to suggest that an analysis of interpretations concerning the political nature of People's Democracies should center upon attitudes toward class struggle.²⁵ For the restoration of this concept was, in the end, more the result of an overriding policy directed at rigidifying alignments within the Eastern European bloc than it was the cause. Obviously, this kind of demarcation is never that clear, and it would be incorrect either to deny the argument that the theory of struggle was crucial to the alliance, or to ignore the fact that action was taken against the rich peasantry. Nevertheless, its meaning was fundamental only in terms of its formal representation, as a constitutive part of a vocabulary defined by the immediacy of pressing issues. In this context, Soviet theorists saw the problem

of nationalism and of specific paths to social construction as the real threat. "It should be noted," Faberov says,

that . . . the principal error committed in Bulgaria during the period before the Fifth Congress of the Party (December 1948) was . . . that [the] dictatorship of the proletariat had not been considered absolutely indispensable . . . in some cases principles other than those established by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin were recognized, as were other ways of transition from capitalism to communism. This led to exaggeration of the special features of the Bulgarian path to socialism.²⁶

The revised emphasis in Soviet ideology was, to some degree, reflected in Mao's statement in 1949 that China was a People's Democratic Dictatorship, in the stage of "New Democracy."²⁷ In effect, the declaration was a studied compromise; by considering China to be a type of People's Democracy, he kept alive a sense of general identity, while, at the same time, through the option of "New Democracy" he underlined the precept of particularity. As has already been noted, however, the idea of distinctiveness, and with it, the primary question as to the substantive content of the political philosophy of Chinese Marxism, presupposed a clearer articulation than that offered by Mao. It is in the writings of Ai Siqu, that a creative attempt was made both to legitimize China's "New Democracy" through the theory that the dialectic between concepts and categories was itself a specific phenomenon.

Ai's method was based upon the concept that difference presumes a framework of identity. Thus to explain China's specificity, he first sets out to establish those aspects of orthodox uniformity. And here he starts with a comparison of the fundamental reasons for the successful seizure of power in both the Bolshevik and Chinese revolutions. And he argues that this was possible because of governmental loss of the monopoly of force. "A ruling class," he says,

which wants to preserve its ruling position must rely upon the armed strength of the army, police, etc. The collapse of the crack troops of the Czar's army thus certainly weakened ruling power, which is just to say that the rulers were in danger of being toppled.

Somehow this conditional tense is reinterpreted as a causative principle, for, he continues, this situation is "just like in China, our people's liberation army defeated the several million reactionary troops of Jiang Kaishek's KMT, and hence his government was subsequently forced to collapse."²⁸ Later in his radio lectures, he reiterates this point, emphasizing that,

if these numerous reactionary troops had not been annihilated, if this crucial state instrument of the KMT had not been smashed, then the demand to overcome reactionary rule, the demand to construct people's political power would have ben unimaginable.²⁹

It is, of course, clear that the analogy between the loss of armed control and the attainment of power in the two revolutions is not exact. For in China, as opposed to the Soviet Union, the telos of revolutionary change was assumed in the course of military action. Yet this imprecision is purposive, in that it allows Ai to sublimate economic considerations to political exigencies. In other words, by concentrating upon the decline of effective ruling force, and by creating from this a conceptual requisite for revolutionary success, he is able to shift determinacy to the level of the superstructure. Thus he begins to resolve the problem of legitimizing a Marxist revolution in an underdeveloped country.

The fundamental stress is upon controlling state power . . . if the old ruling group is weak and isolated, and if the revolutionary force is strong and is able to expand its alliances, then it is possible to seize power even though the economy may be relatively backward . . . to deny this, even though the economy may develop to a higher stage, means that the revolutionary victory will still not be realized. This is one of the manifestations of the political superstructure vis á vis the economy.³⁰

This theoretical justification for political activity in turn presupposed correct leadership and organization. And it is upon this basis that Ai explains the importance of Lenin and Mao. The genius of Lenin was that he "used the general theory of Marxism and each country's revolutionary experience to resolve at that

time the specific practical revolutionary problems in the world, and in the Soviet Union."³¹ It was this, Ai says, which "created the ideology of Leninism":³² a system that provided both the rationale for the seizure of power, and the organizational means for its attainment. "The Russian working class at that time also had the Bolshevik Party, which was a true revolutionary, working class party, established according to the ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism."³³ Because of all this, Ai argues that "at that time in the world, Lenin's thought was the highest point in the development of Marxism-Leninism."³⁴

This separation of Lenin from Leninism is a poor formulation. But it does indicate the problem of hierarchy, of the tension between concepts and categories, that Ai was attempting to confront. To make this clear, it is important to remember that Ai's purpose was not only to provide a Marxist framework which justified both the Chinese revolution as a socialist revolution, and the independence of the form of "New Democracy," but to do so in such a way that theory as legitimation did not become subordinated to the pressing notions of immediacy. This concern, which underlined his writings from the 1930s onward, was, however, restricted by self-defined and imposed requirements. For the dialectic between general continuities and specific discontinuities needed to be developed through and within the added parameters of Leninism. This of course facilitated his effort, but it also limited his conceptual freedom. Because to be consistent, to protect the sovereignty of theory, he now had to ground the subject of revolutionary truth within an idea of interpretation such that the specific could on one level be defined as a universal, while on another level it could be defined as the predicate of this universal. Put another way, there had to be a distinction between thought or principles which were prescriptive, which allowed for or presumed particular realizations, and thought which in its actualization was conditional, which reflected a concrete practice. To obviate this bifurcation, to deduce in each circumstance the general from the particular, would be to permit the accession of each unique theory to the status of an

'ism'; it would, in its deconstruction and reformation of Marxism, threaten the stability of a set framework for critique. And thus what Ai is groping for in his confused discussion of Lenin and Leninism, is that which will allow him to turn concepts, in this case Lenin's ideas, into categories: Leninism, so as to establish the a priori principles to justify the originality of a revolutionary approach. While, at the same time, through the somewhat mystical inclusion of Lenin's thought within the pre-existing continuum of Marxism-Leninism, he is trying to deny to that individual thought a necessary claim to universality.

The point then would be that here Chinese Marxist theory could be nothing more than a second-order mediation. The argument explaining Mao's contribution, from which all else in ideology was to be deduced--that,

because the Chinese working class had Mao Zedong's thought, had the thought which was the synthesis of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution . . . our Chinese working class thus also came to have the highest class consciousness³⁵

--becomes, in effect, a specific type of conceptualization, distinct from, the reflection of, a higher constellation of categories. This is true not only for Chinese praxis, but for Soviet and Eastern European post-revolutionary construction as well. Each, that is, becomes typified as the working-out of what are now hypostatized principles. And it is here, within this idealist framework, that Ai locates the identity and difference between China's "New Democratic" form and that of the Eastern European states. They are dictatorships of the proletariat, actively suppressing capitalism in the transition to socialism. "Soviet society is already without any exploiting classes," and though,

the People's Democratic states of Eastern Europe are now in reality socialist revolutions, are now conducting policies completely to eradicate the exploiting capitalist class . . . because of China's particular conditions, it still is not at the present stage conducting policies completely to eradicate capitalism . . . to describe the Chinese revolution at the present stage: it still is not a socialist revolution, it still is just a "New Democratic" revolution.³⁶

Hence,

may or may it not be said that China is also a kind of form of a working class dictatorship, or in essence is a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat? We reply no. New China, the Soviet Union, and the Eastern European People's Democratic states are all People's Democratic states; on this point there is identity. In speaking of New China's present stage, however, it still is not a dictatorship of the proletariat, but is a state of a People's Democratic Dictatorship, led by the working class, with the workers' and peasants' alliance as its basis.³⁷

National identity was thus defined by moments, by a relation to a formal set of requirements concerning both the dissolution of capitalist elements, and the idea and process of economic growth. "The stage of eradicating the vestiges of capitalism," Ai says,

ought to have a long time-span. This is an inviolate standard, the resolution of which must be seen in the circumstances of each country. It may be generally said that whenever a country's industrial productive development is relatively high, comparatively centralized, it is possible that this stage will be somewhat short; and that whenever a country's industrial productive development is relatively backward, that this stage will be relatively long.³⁸

Similarly, in discussing the transformation of agriculture, he notes that the pattern must be that of "first moving toward co-operatives, and afterwards advancing to collective production; through, for example, the organization of collective farms etc."³⁹ Co-operativization, collectivization, industrialization, etc., were here categorical imperatives, they were the pre-established signposts directing the road-work to socialism (and obviously, since China was at this time, an underdeveloped, predominantly agricultural nation--as was the Soviet Union before it--there was more specification in terms of the process of the socialization of agriculture, than there was to the process of industrialization). Consequently, they were to be distinguished from the developmental strategies offered by other socialist states. For the mediation of situation--the belief that the actualization of principle must be

seen "in the circumstances of each country"--meant not only that a country such as China must inevitably follow its own path, but, as a corollary, that whether or not it chose to emulate in its practice the constructive method of another, at this level concepts were not insuperable.

The hierarchy of dialectical processes, where Marxist-Leninist norms informed and persuaded Chinese theory and practice, providing the conditions for methodological choice, was Ai's attempt to position or fix concepts so that legitimation could be recognized and understood in terms of superstructural determination. The argument, though merely an outline of what in theory the definition of substrate should be, proceeded as it were, from top downwards. Because of this, as a counterpoint, it is useful here to note the approach of a political economist, such as Shen Zhiyuan, whose analytic constructs were derived primarily from the base, from the system itself rather than from the idea of it.

Shen's thesis is somewhat complex in that in order to explain and justify China's "New Democracy," he integrates and develops the discredited thesis of Trainin and Varga, within a framework which is as much determined by his respect for the Soviet economic achievement, and by his acceptance of more fundamental Soviet inspired economic theory, as it is by his sense of nationalism and Marxist 'orthodoxy'. What appears to be the paradox of his approach is that he resists classifications from the stance of Soviet theory that he has already accepted. Or, put another way, though he rejects certain interpretations, in relation to the Soviet definition as to the general road to socialism, he was, at this time, a Chinese fellow-traveler.

This is set out in his book An Outline of Economics in New Democracy, published in 1950, which begins with the striking assertion that both the countries

of Eastern Europe and China should be considered as "New Democracies." They are, he says,

democratic revolutions of a capitalist class character in the period of imperialism and the general crisis of capitalism; that is to say, they are democratic revolutions of a capitalist class character in the period of socialist revolution.⁴⁰

Belonging neither to the economic realm of capitalism nor that of socialism, these distinctive forms were characterized instead by a dual mode of production; one which

'is' capitalism and at the same time it 'is' not capitalism; it 'is' socialism and at the same time it also 'is' not socialism. We say it 'is' capitalism, because it allows capitalism the opportunity to attain development within a relatively long time-span; or at least during the period of New Democratic construction, it permits capitalism to exist . . . it 'is' socialism because the state economy has a socialist essence, grasping the whole country's economic life-line.⁴¹

This definition of a hybrid economy owed much to Varga. And therefore, diplomatically, as a way of balancing conflicting claims, Shen endorsed the more contemporary view that these New or People's Democracies (the names were for him interchangeable) did not possess a complete sovereignty over all indigenous practice. Their social and economic construction needed to be seen instead within the context of general direction; indeed, their particularity was both subsumed and explained under the catch-all phrase: 'transitional'. "Although 'New Democracy,'" he writes,

becomes for the People's Democratic States (China, for example) a necessary economic stage within the historical developmental process, it absolutely is not an independent historical stage, but is only a period with a transitory character.⁴²

Novelty was thus to be understood as something more commonly recognizable; for Shen's idea that "they were not socialist revolutions with the object of eradicating capitalism,"⁴³ was in its immediacy, immanently bound to the concept of a

demarcated future. The formulation of process, the vocabulary of tasks, was already known and, in a sense, quite traditional: "to eradicate imperialism, feudalism power and the monopolizing capitalist class,"⁴⁴ and concomitantly, to encourage and control the accumulation of capital. This was his commitment to a basic orthodoxy. It was, in Chinese form, the Leninist political rephrasing (beginning with the NEP) of Marxist economic necessity.

In turn, circumstance mediated the form of revolutionary expression. The economic determination of a regime, which, in Shen's words was a "special form of Soviet [council] democracy"⁴⁵ presumed an encouragement, a political toleration for all who engaged in the creation of capital for the benefit of the state. These requisites, made manifest in the somewhat relaxed attitude toward the private sector, meant that the dictatorship over need could not as yet be realized as a dictatorship of the proletariat. The administrative structure was thus in a pre-position, based upon an "alliance of each revolutionary class: workers, peasants, farmers, the market petty bourgeoisie (including revolutionary intellectuals), under the leadership of the proletariat," and "its vanguard, the Communist Party,"⁴⁶ still to be consolidated.

This arrangement underscored the dialectic of discontinuity within continuity; the vicissitudinous character of socialist revolutions. And it is to reassert this point, to stress that there was an inherent dynamic to the activity of synthesis, that Shen draws a distinction between the October Revolution and these "New Democratic" revolutions.

The victory of the "New Democracies" of China and Eastern Europe is that which has opened up the peaceful transformation towards the promise of socialism . . . it is the oppressed labouring people's completely new form of moving towards socialism, and shares no identity with the form of the October Revolution.⁴⁷

Shen was not the only Chinese theorist to dislocate this aspect of the Russian Revolution from, in particular, the schema of China's forward course. Ai, for example, had made a similar point in his radio lectures, arguing that in respect

"of the effort to make a steady change towards this transition to socialism under the leadership of the working class, we have the possibility of avoiding that kind of armed revolution such as in the Soviet Union."⁴⁸

This might seem somewhat confusing, especially in the light of Ai's earlier remarks. And thus, to make their intention clear, it should first be noted that Shen's and Ai's contrastive point was grounded in the prior acceptance of the authorized Soviet thesis concerning the October Revolution--it was a proletarian revolution which inaugurated the transition to socialism. Though at different times during the early years of power, Lenin reformulated the chronology of accomplishment, and though the reappropriation of this idea within the principle of 'socialism in one country' was a later development, the fundamental tenet that the seizure of power in 1917 realized a socialist beginning, was here reaffirmed by Shen and Ai.

In China, however, revolutionary success could not be immediately identified with the transitional process; it was still the period of "New Democracy." Shen's and Ai's historical comparison, their juxtaposition of these respective revolutionary movements, was designed therefore to reassure their domestic audience that the transitional stage, once reached, did not presuppose even more violence. Their purpose was to deny the notion that armed conflict was a requisite characteristic of all transitions to socialism. (This is why Ai sees no contradiction in comparing these revolutions in relation to the activity of gaining state control, while contrasting their situations following this achievement. In the former, it was practice which revealed principle; whereas in the latter, it was the working out of principle which revealed the specificity of practice.) Violence had, after all, been evident in the effort to seize power, and during the period when Shen and Ai were writing, there were serious problems regarding the use of force by peasants in the movement for land reform. Hence the need not only to impose order and stability, but also to assuage fears that armed conflict would be a continuous phenomenon led these theorists to insist upon a contrasting historical uniqueness.

This promise of a peaceful horizon did not, however, signify the diremption in Chinese ideology of the importance of class struggle, as one commentator suggests.⁴⁹ On the contrary, amongst others, both Shen and Ai warned of the persistence of class antagonisms. Shen states, for example, that since there are

those who believe that since state power is controlled by the working class, then, within a New Democratic society, though class struggle has not been completely eradicated, it should at least be alleviated in the great part of the country. This kind of method, though it appears reasonable, is completely wrong. Lenin, first, and Stalin afterwards, emphasized that under a dictatorship of the proletariat in the rebuilding period of the New Economic Policy and socialism, class struggle did not abate, rather it became extremely intense. The reason for this is very simple. The overthrown capitalist class, anticipating the final days before their ultimate extinction necessarily struggles with exceptional fierceness and violence. It still is like this in the period of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, and as for the period of "New Democracy," it naturally goes without saying.⁵⁰

At the same time, Ai repeatedly called for ideological re-education in the effort to "suppress the remnants of those internal reactionary forces who would overthrow the country."⁵¹ These statements were part of a general policy of "democracy for the people, dictatorship over the reactionaries,"⁵² where the people were considered as those who aided national construction. In this, the Chinese argument concerning the possibility of state control over capitalist elements, Mao's contention that as "the people have a powerful state apparatus in their hands--there is no need to fear rebellion by the national bourgeoisie,"⁵³ was more sanguine, and in terms of discourse, less emotive than Soviet rhetoric. But this must not be seen in terms of an ideological break, as the advancement in China of heteronomous concepts. On the contrary, with respect to the fundamental tenets of process: the importance of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the continuance of class struggle, etc., and with respect to the importance of Soviet support for domestic achievement, there was not in these early years a split with the Soviet Union over fundamentals.

It was in terms of the stages of transition that theorists in China understood difference. The nomenclature of a "New Democracy," the correspondence of this

name to an economic reality of underdevelopment, and as a consequence, to a political structure committed to a common program, meant that productivity had yet to achieve that level necessary for a transition to socialism. And this contention was in turn willingly accepted in the Soviet Union, where analysts were undoubtedly pleased to be able to postpone the whole question as to the nature of China's social construction. Thus, in September 1950 the editorial of the Comintern journal, "For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy" read

at present the working people of China are not confronted directly with the task of building socialism, the instrument of which is the dictatorship of the proletariat. As Mao Zedong has said: "... when the conditions are ripe, and when this will be approved by the whole country, we, in our steady advance shall enter the new era of socialism."⁵⁴

It is important here to recognize that in China the theoretical discourse which sought to set out the particular ideological dimensions to "New Democracy" was itself informed by a received language regarding process. This is evident for example in the conscious assumption of a terminology of periods and in all that as presumed by them. The specific debates surrounding the method of transition were thus shaped by a more cosmopolitan character. And in this, in terms of making the dialectic of adaptation more clear, it is appropriate to consider Shen's argument somewhat further.

As was stated, he contradicts the Soviet view concerning these 'democracies' by grouping them together. At the same time he draws a distinction between them: though they all belong to the same camp, China is in the rearguard.

The point at which they differ fundamentally, and most importantly, still consists in the level of the development of the economy (the productive forces) ... if it is said that China is a typical example of a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country with extreme backwardness in capitalist industry, then, on the other hand, it may be said that though all the countries of Eastern Europe bear semi-colonial, semi-feudal characteristics, they are typical examples of countries with relatively developed capitalism.⁵⁵

This disparity he says is due to the positive effect of pre-war capital upon the course of economic development in Eastern Europe. By contrast, in China it has been the weakness of national capital that has stunted growth.

Put another way . . . the two aspects of the historical developmental stages have a difference of before and after. The countries of Eastern Europe have been relatively advanced, and in comparison, China is quite backward . . . in Eastern Europe therefore, the historical conditions of each country's "New Democracy" and that of China's "New Democracy," the location of the two, possess a difference as well.⁵⁶

This dichotomy affected possibility. And the capability to direct change was defined by Shen in relation to two major phases.

Taking into account the capitalist class character of the democracy which is the product of "New Democracy," in the entire transitional period from capitalism to socialism, this democracy must pass through two developmental stages. One is the stage of preparing the material prerequisites in place of the transition to socialism, the other is the stage of direct transition to socialism.⁵⁷

Each period was in turn identified by criteria of tasks: the more primary level involved completing the political democratization of this new revolutionary form through the development of production, with a foundation in heavy industry. The point of transition would occur when there was a sufficient material base to eradicate private capitalism and other non-socialist modes of production. Accordingly, Shen considered that "due to China's present economic backwardness, China's New Democratic construction arises from the former state";⁵⁸ while the 'relatively more advanced' countries of Eastern Europe were at the point of transition. Nonetheless, as they were all part of the transitional process, they were all still "New Democracies."

The assumption that revolutionary countries which were not yet socialist were "New Democratic," clearly was designed to give a sense of place and equivalence to Chinese construction. It was also a more suitable assessment than that which was being offered by Soviet theorists. For it took into account the

underdeveloped nature of these political economies, and thus underlined the problems connected with the accumulation of capital. In this, Shen's perspective was informed not only by nationalist considerations, but also by his understanding of Soviet tenets regarding the suppositions of socialism. This is seen for example in his argument that in terms of state production the law of value had ceased to function, and that its role was simply that of regulating price.

Concerning state enterprises in the national economy, since their character is socialist, then their undertakings are precisely not for profit but for production, and has as its goal the construction of a New Democratic state. Therefore the problem of higher profits, the problem of average profit within the national economy does not exist. Within state enterprises, manufacturing commodity pricing receives either the determination or regulation of production price. Thus it does not receive either the determination or regulation of a blind labor theory of value.⁵⁹

This assertive proof, and its corollary, that the continued existence of the labor theory of value in the private economy forced state effort to be focused upon the complete control of the market; the idea that through the development of the plan and the socialization of industry the theory of value was transformed--"already we can say that in the New Democratic economy, the capitalist law of value is losing its original function"⁶⁰--and that therefore its elimination was dependent upon a dual pricing policy, was based almost entirely upon previous Soviet material regarding the 'laws of entry' into socialism. In this, the official 1943 Soviet textbook on political economy was of particular importance. For here it was stated that though in socialist production the law of value was subordinate to the plan, in circulation there were in fact two kinds of markets, two kinds of prices. Thus "the struggle is between the organized market, which is in the hand of the Soviet state, and market elementality."⁶¹

Shen's reiteration of this point, which presumed a rather sanguine view of the Chinese economy, also revealed a prior acceptance of the crucial precept that economic control translates as socialist productive relations. This theoretical fiat,

which ignored the rather glaring question as to how socialist relations could come about without a real economic basis, was for him critically important not only because it was obviously necessary for the legitimation of state action as socialist, but also because it allowed him to re-emphasize the very problem of the base. By dispensing with certain categorical concerns, he could, that is, recast basic ideological questions in terms of the more fundamental requisites of economic need. And thus he sees the primary contradiction within these 'democracies' as that of "backward productive forces which cannot catch up with the kind of progressive productive relations. It is not the latter's restriction of the former."⁶²

If this is so, then clearly the whole accent of policy toward manufacturing has to shift, because the task of maximizing productivity becomes sufficient in and of itself to ensure a peaceful evolution. Political antagonisms do not disappear; they are instead absorbed within the search for economic solutions. Thus in the struggle with capitalism Shen says that

the most important measures which the state grasps are not political (prohibiting, taking disciplinary action, or imposing fines) but are economic. This kind of struggle is first and foremost a struggle for the market.⁶³

The situation is reversed however as regards agriculture. For in agriculture it is the foundation of organizational means and relations that are missing.

Within the small agricultural itself, on the other hand, there also exists the contradiction of the relations of production limiting the development of the productive forces. This is because the basis of scattered, small scale production cannot make use of the contemporary technical conditions.⁶⁴

Yet, Shen does not doubt that this can be resolved; that the state can reorder agricultural organization through the movement toward co-operatives and collectivization. Indeed, his belief in the efficacy of state power, and his desire, though never emphatically stated but threaded throughout, that political activity should not interfere with the business of construction, was basic to his

conceptualization of process. Thus he contrasts the manner of reconciling the antinomic relationship between the forces and relations of production in these "New Democracies," with that which characterized other social systems.

Following New Democracy's daily drawing nearer to socialism, this contradiction necessarily will gradually be moderated, will gradually be lessened. It is not as in past society, that kind which develops to revolution from the rebellion of the 'productive forces vis a vis the productive relations'. When these New Democracies have achieved the transition to socialism, the mutual relation will be just as Stalin indicated: the condition will be that of complete harmony.⁶⁵

Shen's argument makes it clear that the location of the idea of China's uniqueness was still dependent upon a more general categorical imperative. Difference still supposed unity. And thus Shen's creative use of sanctioned and discredited Marxist theses ultimately did little more than refine a set of terms--laws of entry--which had been adapted to a particular situation. The idea of uniqueness related far less to questions concerning a particular path, than it did to the potential for a more general realization: the state of socialist economic achievement. In this, Shen's stress upon the distance between China's circumstance and the fixed criteria of Marxism was appropriate and purposive. It read out of this condition an axiom of gradual economic development through the mitigation of political conflict. Of course moderation and tolerance constituted the basic idea of this "New Democracy": this is what it was about. But here what is critical is that in his statements reflecting a present, Shen also gave expression to the logic underlying discourse. A process of reasoning which identified thought with power.

For, ultimately, all committed reason fell back upon the presumption that the state could manage and control; that it could guide development in an absolutely appropriate way, dispensing with the undesirable effects of class conflict. Indeed, this principle that power somehow guaranteed the achievement of intention, was the a priori of Chinese ideology.

But this categorical imperative threatened to turn that which was immanent into a supposition of immediacy. For, it is clear that the legitimation of a specific line did not of necessity require a dialectical reflection as to the meaning of that line. Indeed, the activity of creative interpretation opened up the real possibility that in the assertion of adherence to Marxism, the transformation of traditional precepts would exhaust or attempt to exhaust the dialectic of content. Therefore, if theory were to be critical, political theorists needed to emphasize, as Ai had, the limited truth to the particular aspect of universal affirmation. The identification of the state with control could not rest as an inviolate condition, translated as a practical absolute. It was instead contradiction, the dialectic of mediation, that had to be kept alive, if only as an idea.

In 1949, however, this motive for preservation was redirected to the more pressing need of providing a justification and explanation for the central concern of raising productivity. The question as to how far a critical understand could go; whether it had the right to question the effectiveness of power, the state of the state as it were, did not disappear, it was simply shelved. And thus, theorists such as Ai, whose work a few years later would in fact come to typify the problems inherent within an attempt to give an account of power, saw their present with respect to the fundamental task of setting out the basis for that power. And thus, for example, he reworks the orthodox Marxist canon of the requirement for economic development so that it becomes the ontic of state policy. There are those in China he says who

do not understand that the goal of the revolution is to liberate the productive forces. Therefore, to want to destroy a certain kind of productive relation, to desire the liquidation of the power of a certain class over the means of production, is because this kind of old productive relation obstructs the development of the productive forces. The reason is not because of a certain class's relatively good standard of living.⁶⁶

In one respect, this may be read as a rather frustrated response to those in the countryside who were complaining that the people in the cities seemed better off. There are some, he says, who "see in the city a lot of people who are dressed in relatively good clothing, even to the point that the clothing of the workers is not comparatively different from that of the rural landowners."⁶⁷ And therefore, they "feel that the objective of struggle is completely inside the cities."⁶⁸ To Ai, these are people who do not understand the goal of the revolution; who selfishly and superficially recall neither the suffering of the working class, nor recognize the pressing need to develop the productive forces.⁶⁹ Yet, Ai's argument was more than merely a rejoinder. For though it is clear that given China's economic situation, some kind of theorizing along these lines was required, the criterion of acceptability: the focus upon raising productivity, was in its simplicity reflective of the poverty of circumstance.

The supposition of national construction thus led him to suggest a subordination of the individual to the collective, which narrowed the very territory of meaning that he had seemingly sought to create. The fixation with the development of the productive forces, the endorsement of this as the telos of the revolution, meant, or rather strongly implied, that praxis was to be conceived instrumentally, purely in terms of the productive relations. There was here apparently no other sphere to individual activity or fulfillment, aside from that of producing or helping to produce for the collective. "In the end," Ai says, "revolutionary policy comes to be determined according to the people as a whole."⁷⁰ This gainsays the distinction between man and citizen in favor of the redefined role of citizen as national laborer.

It must be made clear that to assume that an increase in productivity would at some stage be all that was necessary for the creation of a free and vibrant society, requires either that freedom be redefined in terms of a collective, or it supposes a metaphysical leap of faith. There could be no source or definition to a goal aside

from that which could be derived from this ideology of state management that saw reason as simply another productive force.

There was of course an idea that some different promise to socialism could be found in the writings of Marx. Ai had certainly argued that the principles of Marxism had to be understood in terms of its historical formation, in relation to the great ethical works of German Idealism. But though original and brilliant, this was a formal statement. It merely set out the framework for a critical reflection which could be something other than a strategy for development. And this is how it remained, an abstraction, a speculative premise. There was no attempt to try to work out what might be the postulates to this theoretic of judgment. Instead, the interest of reason stayed tied, seemingly absorbed by the material concerns of its moment. And therefore principle lacked a standard for critique aside from that which could be represented or deduced as the method of the dialectic. But in this the dialectic appeared almost as an aesthetic, as the ideal principles for appearance.

And it is important to recognize that this tying of the object of theory to the objectives of production was the desire of philosophers and political economists. During this period of "New Democracy" there was an agreement that reason should be bound, should correspond to the needs of the state. It was in this spirit, with this sense of Marxist nationalism, that Shen and Ai had defined a space for a distinctive praxis. This was the point of drawing a careful line between the situation in China and that of the states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. And this apparently had effect, for in the end socialist unity was preserved through normative acceptance and the diplomacy of denial: as opposed to its counterparts, China was not yet at the stage of the transition to socialism.

Distance in turn demanded specificity. Therefore it makes sense here to analyze the discussions as to the character of this novel praxis.

One of the most important problems facing the new regime was how to alter the social, political and economic organization within the countryside, so as to be able to move toward collectivization. And thus an early decision of the CCP was to extend the process of land-reform begun during the civil war to the mainland as a whole. Basically this involved the abolition of the landlord's rural ownership, and the redistribution of this land to poor peasants and tenant farmers. At first rich peasants also had to relinquish that land which was tilled neither by themselves nor by hired labor, but this was soon changed. Moreover, in keeping with the overall strategy of "New Democracy," landlords and rich peasants were allowed to protect that property and investment which could be connected to industry and commerce.

As with the other constructive tasks of this novel historical period, land reform was understood as a temporary measure. Having given land to the peasants, they were in turn encouraged by the Party to form mutual-aid labor and exchange teams, and to unite in peasant associations to begin to produce in a co-operative manner. The aim was to increase much needed production through a socializing experience.

Now, in part, the successful application of this line was dependent upon the ideological consciousness of the cadres who were to lead and educate the peasants. But many of these cadres, who had been recruited locally, did not seem to understand the general policy that they were supposed to apply. As a result they relied on the opinions of the masses who themselves were ill-informed as to the higher purpose and meaning of the revolution.⁷¹ This at least was the charge of the Party. Formally this was known as the failing of subjectivism, or here specifically, as the false outlook of empiricism. Thus Ai, for example, pointed out that

empiricism appears to be relatively universal within the work method of many of our cadres . . . they are satisfied merely with the

parochial experience of a narrow working environment, and they are not willing to be open-minded to study each aspect of a new experience; for instance . . . within the villages there is also an absolute equalitarian divisive ideology. This kind of absolute equalitarianism not only wants . . . to destroy the land and proprietorial relationships of the middle, and the new form of rich peasants; in addition they want to use this equalitarian method to destroy city capitalist industry. This is a kind of peasant socialist ideology, is a kind of backward opposition ideology, and is one which we must necessarily oppose . . . an empiricist substitutes tailism for the guidance of the mass line, and considers that the opinion of the masses is entirely correct. The source for this kind of method is the absence of the method of class-analysis.⁷²

At the same time, as if this were not enough, cadres were also said to be guilty of the converse sin of dogmatism: not listening to the people at all. "In carrying out Party policy," Ai says,

many cadres do not understand how to coordinate and resolve applying the general call with the specific. They still do not pay attention to moving to an understanding of the concrete conditions and situation of their time and place. They still do not understand that these policies come to be realized in different conditions by relying upon different kinds of measures.⁷³

To appreciate the underlying substance to this criticism, it is necessary to understand the balancing concerns which informed the ideological framework of Chinese Marxism during this time. For the need to emphasize particularity, in the dual sense of stressing the specificity of Chinese Marxism and that of each locale within China, was leveraged by a parallel need to emphasize generality. This, with respect both to the universality of Marxism, and to the overall coherence of the general line. And thus in relation to the suppositions of the former, theoretical argument tended to highlight practice, direct involvement and an inductive methodology, while with respect to the latter requirements of uniformity, philosophic statements seemed to insist upon a set of maxims which were in fact to govern that practice. In this regard, Ai's work on epistemology stands as the archetypal expression for the inherent tensions and latent idealism which

characterized the philosophic-ideological corpus of Chinese Marxism. And therefore his understanding deserves some further discussion.

In accord with established philosophy in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Ai believed that matter or objective reality (and here the two were assumed to be synonymous) existed independently and prior to human consciousness. Hence thought reflected existence. "Human knowledge," Ai says, ". . . is a reflection of the external world; whatever exists in the external world just is what we are able to know."⁷⁴ Now in Marxist orthodoxy the development of the materialist concept of reflection is usually credited to Engels. As was noted previously, he argued that perception and thought were caused by the activity of the external world upon our sense organs.

We simply cannot get away from the fact everything that sets man acting must first find its way through their brains . . . the influences of the external world express themselves in his brain, are reflected therein as feelings, thoughts, impulses, volitions.⁷⁵

This causal theory supposedly showed the error of the idealist assumption that the subject creates his world conceptually. Instead, concepts were the 'conscious reflex' of the dialectic. "The dialectic of the mind," Engels says, "is only the reflection of the forms of motion of the real world, both of nature and of history."⁷⁶ Accordingly, Hegel's three laws defining development need to be reinterpreted so that they are seen as laws of thought derived from nature. These laws are of course the mutual transformation of quantity into quality, the law of the mutual transformation of opposites, and the law of the negation of the negation. And it is due to discoveries in the positive sciences and human capability in general, that humans are able to make use of these laws

Thus dialectics reduced itself to the science of the general laws of motion, both of the external world and of human thought--two sets of laws which are identical in substance, but differ in so far as the human mind can apply them consciously. . . .⁷⁷

It is through practice that we come to know the correctness or adequacy of our perceptions and understanding. Moreover, he says that practice demonstrates that the Kantian 'thing-in-itself' is an idealist myth. For once we have created something, we know both it and the conditions for its production. Indeed, given the physiological limitations of perceptual ability, and the state of scientific knowledge at a particular moment, nothing in principle is beyond understanding. There are philosophers, Engels says

who question the possibility of any cognition or at least any exhaustive cognition, of this world . . . the most telling refutation of this, as of all philosophical crotchets, is practice, namely experiment and industry. If we are able to prove the correctness of our conceptions of a natural process, bring it into being out of its conditions and make it serve our own purposes in the bargain, then there is an end to the Kantian ungraspable 'thing-in-itself'. The chemical substances produced in the bodies of plants and animals remained such 'things-in-themselves' until organic chemistry began to produce them one after another, whereupon 'thing-in-itself' became a thing for us.⁷⁸

Practice so defined does not refute the Kantian dualism. Indeed, in relation to cognitive capability a sense of confidence is reached once it is recognized that Kant's structuring a priori's, and his notion of a numenological content were designed to reveal the potential of knowledge with respect to phenomenon. The limitations imposed on knowledge were to show just how much men could grasp. And thus as long as one accepted the restrictions of appearance, everything was open to investigation. Further, Engels' somewhat confused idea as to the meaning of the categories 'in-itself' and 'for-itself', his view that they were conceptual opposites, meant that he appeared to imply that everything which remained unknown was a 'thing-in-itself'.⁷⁹

The problems resulting from all this led Lenin to assert that Engels' intention was not to respond to Kant, but was to show that in principle things were as they seemed.⁸⁰ This argument, based in turn upon earlier statements of Engels, became

the foundation for Lenin's 'copy theory' of perception.⁸¹ In this he states that reflection is to be understood as a mirror which depicts objective reality. "Matter is a philosophical category designating the objective reality which is given to man by his sensations, and which is copied, photographed and reflected by our sensations while existing independently of them."⁸²

As might be expected, this thesis also aroused a great deal of controversy, particularly over the seemingly static or passive role which Lenin assigned to the mind. And it does seem that later, in his Philosophical Notebooks, he corrects any misconceptions--or as some would have it, rectifies his mistake⁸³--by insisting that since knowledge mirrors contradiction, knowledge itself must be understood dialectically: "as an eternal process of movement, in which contradictions are forever emerging and being resolved."⁸⁴ This contradiction emerges in part from the antinomy between what is known at any given time and all that is to be known. But what was not clear in all of this was how literally Lenin meant his theory to be taken. Was the concept of a mirror-like reflection to be understood as a metaphor, as itself an image, or was it somehow to be understood as substantially true?

On this point, Ai interprets Lenin figuratively, arguing that "we may possibly use the metaphor of a photograph in discussing perceptual knowledge."⁸⁵ Primarily, Ai follows Leninist tradition in assuming that the world may be completely known, and that rational knowledge is achieved through perception. "Between objects and our reasoning," Ai says,

it is necessary to have a bridge . . . the bridge which is at the source of reaching rational knowledge from the nature of objects is perceptual knowledge. Put another way, without perceptual knowledge, rational knowledge is not possible.⁸⁶

Experience therefore is a condition of reason. Abstract thought is initially dependent upon sensory activity, and ultimately is revived through practice. Quoting Lenin, Ai notes that "practice is the criterion of truth."⁸⁷ From this it

would seem to follow, as a corollary, that knowledge develops from the recognition of that which is new. "The theoretical knowledge of books," Ai says,

cannot touch ready-made upon every kind of specific condition that we encounter . . . therefore, when we use the theoretical knowledge of scientific works to come to resolve the problems within our work, our correct attitude should be to take the already fixed laws as a general guide, while we ourselves, still necessarily under this general guidance, turn towards independent research work, turn towards those specific circumstances, increasingly to analyze the perceptual material of these new conditions to find a number of new laws.⁸⁸

This was the existential principle of Sinification, the concept which justified the policies of a "New Democracy." And at the same time it was the flexible aspect to the overall injunction to the cadres. Paying attention to one's area through, in part, the process of first accumulating and collating data (from matter through perception to abstraction) and thereafter testing specific formulations, was basically the 'mass-line' principle of theory and practice. "The correct knowledge of things and the guiding method of work," Ai says, "is what Mao has called 'to come to concentrate, to persist in return,' is 'from the masses, to the masses'."⁸⁹

But here, the empiricist strain to this methodology (the concept of 'learning from facts') must be placed within its determining Marxist context. For it must be understood that as the line was organized from the top, as cadres were ultimately to be creative in application rather than in initiation, and as Chinese Marxism had its more universal allegiance, so was there a substratum governing cognition. In other words, what might recall the ideas of Bacon or Hume, should not obfuscate the deep divisions between, on the one hand Marxism and Chinese Marxism, and on the other, the philosophic tradition of empiricism.

And here, to stay with Ai's understanding as a model, it must first be pointed out that he does not argue that rational knowledge is simply based upon the impressions received from objective phenomena. Instead, knowledge was to be understood as mediated, as that which was determined by a given class position.

The form of economic activity, one's relation to the economic sphere, was incorporated, inseparable from a conceptual structure. "The realm of things that man is able to come into contact with," he argues, "is dependent upon his material life conditions and his class status. Differing social-material life conditions and differing class positions make the objects of contact different, and thus knowledge is also different."⁹⁰ This is of course a fundamental principle of Marxism and is completely at variance with the concepts of empiricism. What Ai is basically explaining is the axiom of praxis: the concept that the forms of consciousness--ideologies--may only be analyzed in terms of their social, political and economic circumstances. The activity of perception, and the content of abstraction integrate and reflect their prevailing economic relations.⁹¹

Similar things, under different conditions just have different characters and laws; just have different meanings. Humans, for example . . . if we come to see them from the dialectical method, we are then able to understand that though they are alike as humans, as a result of their dependence upon different material conditions, they have a different class differentiation . . . one who invests in the operation of a factory exploiting workers is known as a capitalist. One who is without a bit of capital aside from his labor power and thus can do nothing but sell his labor power is known as a proletarian.⁹²

Furthermore, the mind is not only supposed to interpret phenomena through a particular dialectical determination, the synthesis of sense data was (had to be) unified or formed by the essential laws of the dialectic. These laws which governed and organized empirical activity, which provided the substratum of consciousness, were broadly defined as the basic tenets of scientific socialism. And for Chinese Marxism, Ai sets them out as first, that everything exists in organic relation to everything else.⁹³ Second, that all things may be located as in the process of occurring, developing, or dying.⁹⁴ And third, that this process itself could be specified in terms of the three basic principles of transformation which Engels had announced.⁹⁵

Perception was therefore limited; as with a photograph its information was fragmentary. For the character of historical and natural phenomena was that they were governed by invariant laws; by principles found in knowledge and used in judgment. In this, the ideological determination of all social thought was truly understood only by that consciousness which was able to grasp the fundamental mechanisms operating within that society. This was the dynamic of the concept of reflection: as material circumstance gave rise to thought so in turn did that thought posit the meaning and manner through which need was to be satisfied. As a revolutionary process in China, Ai says that this initially occurred as a movement from the top downward. It was through the activity of revolutionaries who researched into their past and present, who compared and contrasted the theoretical systems of other countries, that the most suitable ideology, Marxism, was found:

although revolutionary consciousness is a reflection of the revolutionary classes' life, it certainly is not that this consciousness arose directly and naturally from this classes' life. This revolutionary consciousness is to be sought in the arduous efforts of the progressive representatives of the revolutionary class. And, after the propagation of education and practice by them, mutually uniting theoretical principles with the masses' practical struggle to live, thereafter, it became the face of the revolutionary struggle.⁹⁶

This hierarchical framework of ideological awareness suited and correspondingly formed an epistemology which presumed all that it should have proved. For what the vanguard passed on was the necessary condition that thought had to adopt the standpoint of the dialectic in order to be able to analyze the manifestations of invariant materialist relations. And this makes it clear that the concept of praxis had another referential basis, a metaphysic, higher than that of the mode of production. For in relation both to the normative tenets of scientific socialism and to those of the line, judgment already presumed a correctly informed political stance. "Standpoint, viewpoint, and method," Ai says, are three things which cannot be separated."⁹⁷

These thoughts correctly correspond to the truth; these thoughts run counter to truth; these are ultimately determined by a definite class position. To break from the masses' revolutionary struggle, or those petty bourgeois elements who vigorously harm the class struggle; their eyes do not dare to turn towards objective reality, their thoughts just cannot reflect objective things. They continuously have incorrect thoughts.⁹⁸

Here, what was meant by objective reality was of course politically defined. But then if praxis was to some degree preconceived, a question arises as to the relationship between class and class position. The kind of interpretation which sees knowledge in terms of class status, makes it difficult to advance an argument that village cadres, and the differing strata of the people, could truly inculcate an ideology of the working class. If, on the other hand, 'reflection' was to be understood as a stage or process governed by preformative or transcendent maxims, and if it could be said that the understanding of them was primarily dependent upon attitude, then the idea of thought-reform became a meaningful possibility. For then, a change in thought or the adoption of a new mode of thinking could precede a change in class position. This would follow from the theory that political change could be in advance of a stage of economic development.

This inherent tension between the suppositions of a received mode of reason and China's specific economic circumstance, was partially resolved in theory by Ai through his insistence that the role of a class and the character of its thought, needed to be understood in respect to the changing definition of material requirements. His argument was that since the ideology of a class was ultimately linked to a process of production, then in a situation where there was no dominant mode of production, the thought of a class would reflect the contradictory aspects of that economic whole. Each ideology would contain within itself a unity of opposites. And therefore, all thought had something positive to contribute. "To be able fully to resolve the problem of the ideological transformation of each class," he writes, "it is necessary correctly to analyze the particularities of each class. This will explain what is progressive, of value to expand within the thought of all these classes, and

what is backward, regressive, and should be overcome."⁹⁹ And Ai states that if national capital opposes, for example, the economic invasion of imperialism, makes an effort to establish the people's own industry, takes the general welfare into consideration, etc., then "we may say that this capitalist kind of ideology of exploitation and profit in the present stage is reasonable, has a positive function, and we should not hinder its expansion."¹⁰⁰

This confident encouragement of capitalist activity, the belief that the positive side of its ideology could be integrated within the theory of practice, was, in its expression of the period's transitional character, a reaffirmation of the guiding principle that organization, and the ideology of that organization, could contain and direct the dynamic of political and economic development. To argue that there were constructive aspects to each class' system of consciousness which could correspond to the requirements of a teleologically defined process, clearly assumed a principle of control, and here, an assurance of capability. This conviction of administrative capacity, an axiom which of course informed the reception of Marxism in China, in turn implied that the focus of concern had to be with the establishment of socialist or socialist type of productive relations. As with the preformative nexus to praxis, or precisely because there had to be some sort of pre-structure to it, so was there the supposition as to the setting up of a particular political-economic framework. It is necessary, Shen wrote, to

prepare a definite social condition--to establish a definite relation for people within the productive process. It is just under this kind of relation that the instruments of labor, labor power and the laboring object, that these material requisites for production are able to come together. In capitalist society . . . it was still necessary beforehand to establish a mutual relationship between the one who had the factory (the capitalist) and the one who had the labor power (the worker); without this kind of relationship, the machines would not have moved.¹⁰¹

To make the point as to the social determination of technique through the example of the initial situation of the wage-laborer, is to discuss the requisites of

capitalist production in terms of a previous process of development. Shen, Ai, and the leadership in general, however, were talking of a future pattern of growth, of imposed political and economic stages which could be anticipated and continuously managed. The underlying assumption here was apparently that the material instruments of production would be, or would be perceived to be in correspondence with suitable productive relations. In this, the question as to whether or not contradictions would not of necessity arise as the requirements of industry came into conflict with the narrow basis of industry and agriculture, was deflected or absorbed within the tenet that as these suppositions changed, so the next level of productive organization would be introduced. With a socialist superstructure, qualitative changes in the base would not therefore demand or necessitate an equivalent change in the nature of the political system. The political economy would instead remain socialist. And therefore economic development would be the fullest expression, the final realization of its own basic character.

Stance therefore insured, or was to insure the correctness of course. Thought-reform was both crucial and permanent since ideology could hinder as well as promote. Misinformed, the activity of labor could give rise to all sorts of politically diremptive theories: peasant socialism, petty bourgeois notions of individualism, etc. This Party conceptualization of thought, however, obfuscated, redirected the idea of interaction away from its dialectical basis. For to insist upon the adoption of a particular standpoint, and to assume that through it consequence could always be essentially determined, located the dialectic, fixed its role in practice. And this neither admitted nor implied a sense of mutual transformation, nor did it recognize that movement could be manifest in unintended result.

The source of deviation, of that which arose irrespective of original purpose, could always be explained in terms of incorrect stance. But in this, the specification of thought through a formalized discourse set what in principle could not be so stated. For as a concept the dialectic described a manner of thinking; it

was not a method of analysis. Indeed, to express it in such a way revealed the distance between what it signified as speculative thought, and what politically it had become. To explain the dialectic in systematic terms meant having to adopt a traditional sentence structure and a form of logic which in itself denied inherent negation, in favor of a positive understanding. The idea of the dialectic gainsaid its expression through the form of a statement.¹⁰² Instead, the constructs of thought were to be seen as the unity of antagonisms, as that which was to be pushed in regard to their non-identity.

But this, the meaning of the dialectic, conflicted with the aim and phrasing of the rectification movements. For here the emphasis was on supersession in terms of unity and resolution. Non-identity was a fetter, in that true consciousness was that which had overcome the disenchantment of previous influences and was now in, or was to be in, normative correspondence with the laws of development. The restriction of thought through a language which concealed principle through proclamation was thus not surprising; it was critical for the implementation of praxis. And this meant that, though logically categorical assertion could not deny in principle the operation of a dialectic, it could deny the means through which the character and complexities of antinomies could be recognized.

The problem was that consciousness was apparently so tied to the needs of production, that thought was in danger of seeing these objective requirements as the sole motive for awareness. And as was already suggested, this would define thought instrumentally, as another productive force. Indeed, Shen argues that thought would act as a material force precisely when the people saw themselves precisely as they were seen: as the true aspect of production.

The workers and peasant masses are the most important element within the production process. The contradiction in old China between the forces and the relations of production thus appeared as the class struggle of the Chinese people, with the workers and peasant masses as the main element, in relation to the imperialists, feudalists, and the bureaucratic capitalist class.¹⁰³

This perhaps went some way toward justifying the organization of productive relations, toward resolving Marxist contradictions, but it did not answer, or attempt to suggest that the people were to be conceived as anything other than the main force for production. To celebrate capabilities, as Mao did in the "Foolish Old Man Who Moved the Mountains,"¹⁰⁴ to insist, as Ai and Shen did repeatedly, that "history was in the first instance the history of producers,"¹⁰⁵ restored pride; broke through the fetters of other ideologies by establishing humans as the moving spirit of history. But to translate this into a conception of praxis which emphasized the ability of self in terms of the good of the nation-state, of serving the people through the adoption of a "style of plain living and hard struggle,"¹⁰⁶ while certainly understandable in terms of the requirements of circumstance, nevertheless suggested a vision of a rather bleak state. And even Marx, who adored work, would have found this unsettling. For as he said,

Communists . . . do not put to people the demand: love one another, do not be egoists; on the contrary, they are very well aware that egoism, just as much as self-sacrifice, is in definite circumstances a necessary form of the self-assertion of individuals. Hence, communists by no means want . . . to do away with the "private individual" for the sake of the "general," "self-sacrificing man."¹⁰⁷

By the middle of 1952, the problems connected with cadre activity and the need to increase production intensified. In addition to the drain upon resources caused by China's involvement in the Korean War, there was great concern over organizational deficiencies: 'waste, commandism and violations of laws and discipline', and over the activities of the private sector. Thus, as the first efforts to establish mutual-aid teams and cooperatives got under way, they did so within the setting of two movements: the Three and Five Anti campaigns, which were designed both to clean up the bureaucracy and to suppress the dealings of counter-revolutionaries.

It is in the midst of all this that Ai publishes a rather severe self-critique, in which he repudiates his previous argument that capitalist thought has some role to play in state construction. Concerning the idea that there were positive aspects to the ideology of national capital, he now says, "although the logical premise was correct, the conclusion was completely wrong. It is the conclusion of pure formalism lacking a direct involvement in real circumstances."¹⁰⁸ This involvement, which he traces back to the May 4th Movement, has shown that the capitalist class has always essentially obstructed progress. "We may easily see that since the May 4th movement, China's capitalist class ideology has gone in a counter-revolutionary direction."¹⁰⁹ And though members of this class have joined the revolution, this has been purely out of a (destructive) self-interest; "in reality this proves that throughout, its ideology has not been able correctly to reflect the objective existence of Chinese society; it has not been able to reflect China's material developmental needs."¹¹⁰ But though its ideology is "bankrupt," capitalism cannot as yet be fully liquidated, and thus the suffering will continue. "Since capitalism has not been eradicated, the working class and other laboring people will have to endure a certain stage of capitalist exploitation."¹¹¹ Harmony was now to be replaced by the virulence of class struggle.

It must have been particularly difficult for such a celebrated philosopher as Ai, the intellectual confidant of Mao, to have to recognize that he had so completely misunderstood the working out of the dialectic. And certainly the tenor of his argument a few years later bears the mark of this self-confession. But what is important to note here is that the force of the present, "the direct involvement in real circumstances," simply locked insight back on to a correspondence with what was now a changed line. (It was this development which had caused Ai to realize his mistake.) And therefore, neither Ai nor any other theorist could anticipate the direction of movement. For "New Democracy" as a period was coming to an end,

and a new stage, a new declaration of achievement and supposition was about to be declared. But of course such a pronouncement, that China was now at the stage for the transition to socialism, could only come from the top. And in turn, a statement of such decisiveness demanded a theoretical account of this location. A philosophic provision for a territory and its categorical structures.

This explains the critical importance of "On Contradiction" and "On Practice." For as landmarks, they re-established reason within a specific form for passage. Thus an analysis as to the meaning of this transition supposes an understanding as to the way in which this inwardness was posited.

Notes

- 1 Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy," Selected Works, Vol. 2, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1967, p. 350; and Mao Zedong ji, Vol. 7, Tokyo: Hokubasha, p. 159.

It is interesting to note here that once again, Mao's use of Marxist categories to describe China's revolution betrayed the emphasis of his approach. Thus, as Stuart Schram points out, in the original version of "On New Democracy," Mao incorporates the peasantry within the category of the petty-bourgeoisie, and thus he saw the class forces comprising the revolution in terms of a three-class bloc: "The proletariat, the petty-bourgeoisie, and the capitalist class" (Mao Zedong ji, p. 192). But the absorption of the peasantry within this category could not be sustained, since it undercut the singular value of the peasantry for China's revolution. And therefore, in his other writings at this time, he emphasizes the importance of the peasantry in the armed struggle. (Schram, The Political Thought of Mao Tse-Tung, pp. 82-83). Later, as shall be discussed, Mao's assumption that the peasantry was a petty-bourgeois, commodity producing sector, when in fact it was not, became the basis for a policy that caused a crisis in grain supply (cf. Chapter 5).

- 2 "On New Democracy," p. 350, Mao Zedong ji, Vol. 7, p. 159.
- 3 This is noted by Samuel L. Sharp, New Constitutions in the Soviet Sphere, Washington, DC: Foundation for Foreign Affairs, 1950, p. 11.
- 4 Karl Marx, "Conspectus of 'Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy,'" in David Fernbach (ed.), Karl Marx: The First International and After, London: Penguin Books, 1974, pp. 333-334.
- 5 Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy," p. 381; Mao Zedong ji, Vol. 7, p. 198.
- 6 "On New Democracy," p. 381; Mao Zedong ji, Vol. 7, p. 198.

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- 7 "On New Democracy," pp. 364-365; Mao Zedong ji, Vol. 7, pp. 177-178.
 - 8 "On New Democracy," p. 351; Mao Zedong ji, Vol. 7, p. 160.
 - 9 Mao Zedong, "On Coalition Government," Selected Works, vol. 3, 1967, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, pp. 234-235; Mao Zedong ji, Vol. 10, pp. 226-227.
 - 10 Quoted in Stuart R. Schram, "The Cultural Revolution in Historical Perspective," in Stuart R. Schram (ed.), Authority, Participation and Cultural Change in China, Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1973, p. 22.
 - 11 Quoted in Stuart R. Schram, The Political Thought of Mao Tse-Tung, p. 70.
 - 12 The summary of the views of Varga and Trainin (though not the later interpretative points) is drawn from Samuel L. Sharp, "New Democracy: A Soviet Interpretation," American Perspective, vol. 1, no. 6, pp. 368-381, and from H. Gordon Skilling, "'People's Democracy' in Soviet Theory I, II," Soviet Studies, no. 6, 7, pp. 16-33, 131-149.
 - 13 Samuel L. Sharp, "New Democracy . . .," p. 373.
 - 14 Samuel L. Sharp, "New Constitutions . . .," pp. 9-10.
 - 15 Samuel L. Sharp, "New Democracy . . .," pp. 371-373.
 - 16 Ibid., pp. 374-381.
 - 17 N. P. Faberov, "On Classes and Parties in the People's Democracies of Central and Southeastern Europe," Current Digest of the Soviet Press (hereafter Current Digest), vol. II, no. 4, 1949, p. 3.
 - 18 B. S. Mankovsky, "The New Stages in Development of the People's Democracies as States of the Type," Current Digest, vol. II, no. 35, 1950, p. 3.
 - 19 B. S. Mankovsky, "The Nature of People's Democracies," Current Digest, vol. 1, no. 42, 1949, p. 12.
 - 20 Faberov, p. 4.
 - 21 Ibid., p. 3.
 - 22 N. Pukhlov, "Reorganization of Agriculture in the People's Democracies," Current Digest, vol. II, no. 4, 1950, p. 6.
 - 23 N. D. Kazantsev, "Agrarian Reforms in the Countries of People's Democracies," Current Digest, Vol. 1, No. 42, 1949, p. 15.
 - 24 Josef Revai, "On the Character of Our People's Democracies," translated in Foreign Affairs, March-April 1949, vol. 28, no. 1.

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- 25 This is argued by Benjamin Schwartz in "China and the Soviet Theory of 'People's Democracy,'" in Benjamin Schwartz, Ideology and Flux, New York: Praeger, 1967, pp. 47-65.
- 26 Faberov, p. 5.
- 27 Mao Zedong, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," Selected Works, vol. 4, Foreign Language Press.
- 28 Ai Siqi, Lishi weiwulun, shehui fazhan shi (Historical materialism, social developmental history), Shanghai, 1951, p. 139 (this covers both quotes).
- 29 Ibid., p. 175.
- 30 Ibid., p. 137.
- 31 Ibid., p. 137.
- 32 Ibid., p. 137.
- 33 Ibid., p. 137.
- 34 Ibid., p. 137.
- 35 Ibid., p. 137.
- 36 Ibid., pp. 134-135.
- 37 Ibid., p. 190.
- 38 Ibid., p. 142.
- 39 Ibid., p. 142.
- 40 Shen Zhiyuan, Xin minzhuzhuyi jingji gailun (An outline of economics in new democracy), Shanghai, 1950 (revised edition), p. 6.
- 41 Ibid., p. 22.
- 42 Ibid., p. 23.
- 43 Ibid., p. 7.
- 44 Ibid., p. 7.
- 45 Ibid., p. 7.
- 46 Ibid., p. 7.
- 47 Ibid., p. 7.

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- 48 Ai, Lishi weiwulun, shehui fazhan shi, p. 192.
- 49 Schwartz. The problem, in part, is that Schwartz tends to see the term 'class-struggle' in its most forceful aspect, as concomitant with violence; and, in this sense, as somehow the correspondent of a proletarian dictatorship. But this over-simple identification obfuscates the need to analyze the significance of a constituent term with respect to a more general interpretation concerning the character of a period. Between 1949 and 1955, for example, almost every Chinese theorist who was a member of the Party, noted the persistence of 'class-struggle'; but what they meant by this, the nature of the threat of capitalist restoration, varied according to their understanding as to the nature of the base and the superstructure. Moreover, Schwartz's misplaced emphasis clouds the distinction which the Chinese did in fact draw between themselves and the Soviet Union--a difference, which, as will shortly be noted (n. 54) was accepted both in the Soviet Union and in the countries of the Eastern European bloc.
- 50 Shen, p. 28.
- 51 Ai, Lishi weiwulun, shehui fazhan she, p. 267.
- 52 Mao Zedong, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," p. 279.
- 53 Ibid., p. 381.
- 54 The editorial was entitled "First Anniversary of the People's Republic of China," in "For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy," September 29, 1950.
- 55 Shen, p. 8.
- 56 Ibid., p. 9.
- 57 Ibid., p. 9.
- 58 Ibid., p. 9.
- 59 Ibid., p. 25.
- 60 Ibid., p. 26.
- 61 Quoted in J. Miller, "A Political Economy of Socialism in the Making," Soviet Studies, no. 4, p. 420.
- 62 Shen, p. 34.
- 63 Ibid., p. 32.
- 64 Ibid., p. 34.
- 65 Ibid., p. 35.

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- 66 Ai, Lishi weiwulun, shehui fazhan she, p. 114.
- 67 Ibid., p. 115.
- 68 Ibid., p. 114.
- 69 Ibid., p. 114.
- 70 Ibid., p. 116.
- 71 For a more detailed discussion of this point see Thomas P. Bernstein, "Keeping the Revolution Going: Problems of Village Leadership After Land-Reform," in John Wilson Lewis, Party, Leadership, and Revolutionary Power in China, Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1970, pp. 239-267.
- 72 Ai Siqu, "Fandui jingyanzhuyi" (Oppose empiricism") in Ai Siqu, Congtong zhugi (From the beginning), Shanghai, 1950, pp. 105-106, 109.
- 73 Ibid., p. 102.
- 74 Ai Siqu, Dazheng zhexue (Popular philosophy), Shanghai, 1978, a reprint of the 1948 edition, pp. 86-87.
- 75 Friedrich Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy," in Marx and Engels Basic Writings in Politics and Philosophy, ed. Lewis Feuer Fontana, Glasgow, 1969, p. 225.
- 76 Friedrich Engels, Dialectics of Nature, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, p. 203.
- 77 Friedrich Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach . . .," p. 266.
- 78 Ibid., p. 249.
- 79 This is brought out by Lukács in his discussion of Engels' notion of the dialectic in History and Class Consciousness, pp. 131-133, and is mentioned as a criticism, an incorrect criticism, by Lenin in Materialism and Empiro-Criticism, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1972, p. 108.
- 80 Lenin, Materialism and Empiro-Criticism, pp. 109-110.
- 81 For a view stressing the difference between Lenin and Engels see Z. A. Jordon, Philosophy and Ideology, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1963, p. 325.
- 82 Lenin, p. 123.
- 83 Merleau-Ponty and Korsch adopt this kind of argument. Merleau-Ponty in Adventures of the Dialectic, trans. Joseph Bien, Heinemann, London, 1973; and Korsch in Marxism and Philosophy, trans. Fred Halliday, London: New Left Books, 1958.

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- 84 Quoted in Gustav Wetter, Dialectical Materialism, p. 352.
- 85 Ai, Dazheng zhexue, pp. 86-87. It should be noted that this, and the following material from Dazheng zhexue was not included within the original edition reprinted in Ai Siqu, Ai Siqu wenji (Ai Siqu Collected Works), vol. 1, pp. 140-274, Beijing, 1981.
- 86 Ibid., p. 1108.
- 87 Ibid., p. 121.
- 88 Ibid., p. 118.
- 89 Ibid., p. 129.
- 90 Ibid., p. 87.
- 91 For a discussion of this point see Charles Taylor, "Marxism and Empiricism," in Montefiore and Williams (eds.), British Analytic Philosophy, London: Kegan Paul, 1967, pp. 65-87.
- 92 Ai, Dazheng zhexue, p. 162.
- 93 Ibid., p. 159.
- 94 Ibid., p. 171.
- 95 Ibid., pp. 176-212.
- 96 Ai, Lishi weiwulun shehui fazhan shi, p. 244.
- 97 Ai, Dazheng zhexue, p. 153.
- 98 Ibid., p. 125.
- 99 Ai Siqu, "Lun sixiang gaizao wenti" ("On the problem of ideological transformation"), Xuexi, No. 17, Vol. 13, March 1951, p. 5. This point is also made, though less fully, in his article "Xuexi sixiang jiefang er douzheng" ("Study for the struggle and liberation of thought") in Congtougou zueqi, pp. 93-94, and in Lishi weiwulun, pp. 260-261.
- 100 Ai, "Lun sixiang gaizao wenti," p. 5.
- 101 Shen Zhiyuan, "Lun shengchanli yu shengchanguanxi zhu wenti" ("On the various problems between the relations and the forces of production"), Xin jianshe, no. 6, vol. 4, 1951, p. 29.
- 102 The argument concerning the expression of the dialectic is drawn from Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hegel and the Dialectic of the Ancient Philosophers," in Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hegel's Dialectic, trans. P. Christopher Smith, New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1976, pp. 5-34.

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- 103 Shen, "Lun shengchanli yu shengchangguanxi zhu wenti," p. 30.
- 104 Mao Zedong, "The Foolish Old Man Who Moved the Mountains," Selected Works, vol. III, pp. 271-273.
- 105 Shen, "Lun shengchanli yu shengchangguanxi zhu wenti," p. 27; and Ai, Lishi weiwulun, shehui fazhan she, ad. passim.
- 106 Mao Zedong, "Always Keep to the Style of Plain Living and Hard Struggle," Selected Works, vol. V, Foreign Language Press, Beijing, 1977.
- 107 Karl Marx, Selected Writings, ed. David McLellan, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 183.
- 108 Ai Siqi, "Renqing zichanjieji sixiang de fandongxing" ("Recognize Clearly the Struggle Against Capitalist Class Ideology"), Xuexi, no. 3, 1951, p. 4.
- 109 Ibid., p. 4.
- 110 Ibid., p. 6.
- 111 Ibid., p. 6.

PART II

THE DESIGNATION OF THE DIALECTIC

The effect of making men think in accordance with dogmas, perhaps in the form of certain graphic propositions, will be very peculiar: I am not thinking of these dogmas as determining men's opinions but rather as completely controlling the *expression* of all opinions. People will live under an absolute, palpable tyranny, though without being able to say they are not free. . . . For dogma is expressed in the form of an assertion, and it is unshakable, but at the same time any practical opinion *can* be made to harmonize with it; admittedly more easily in some cases than in others. It is not a *wall* setting limits to what can be believed, but more like a *brake* which, however, practically serves the same purpose; it's almost as though someone attached a weight to your foot to restrict your freedom of movement. This is how dogma becomes irrefutable and beyond the reach of attack.

(Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*)

Though the idea of synthesis had, to some degree at least, been clarified, realized in the declarations of state purpose, the concepts and categories attendant on this ideological imperative remained, throughout the period of "New Democracy," ill-defined. Sinification was still more a philosophical attitude than a concept of reason. What was needed therefore was a statement or a restatement of thought, an ordering which could provide the canons for the representation of a Chinese essence. The ground of Marxism had to be grounded.

The setting out of the epistemes of reason demanded of course some sort of elite finalization. But this in turn ran the risk of an affirmative foreclosure, since state intention would be to legitimate rather than deny (this irrespective of the ad hominem of the 'withering away of the state'). And thus the need for preservation might easily result in a kind of cancelled thought, where constructs simply accounted for power.

But here, this suggests a course, a stripping of the concept of the dialectic which had yet to be determined. Moreover, the anticipation of such an outcome was seemingly gainsaid by the very work which established the new theoretical condition for ground through the celebration of discord: "On Contradiction." For, it was in "On Contradiction" and its companion piece "On Practice" that Mao disclosed the principles for what was to be a very particular form of enlightenment.

And thus an understanding of the disposition of the dialectic, its practical intent, becomes inseparable from an analysis of these two works. It is only after the basis of judgment is made clear, that the function and character of interpretation may be explained.

The following chapters are concerned with the arrangement of a claim for reason; and the activity of this thought.

CHAPTER 4

THE EXPLANATION OF GROUND: MAO'S PHILOSOPHICAL STATEMENT ON THE CONDITION OF CONDITION

"On Practice" and "On Contradiction" are the two most significant philosophical works by Mao. They differ from some of his other works which might also be said to reveal philosophical concerns, in that here Mao defines the theoretical basis to the idea of synthesis. In the sense of philosophy, they represent a categorical answer to the fundamental epistemological questions of what and how a Chinese Marxist can know. Or, as Qian Jiazhu puts it:

with "On Practice" that which is resolved is the problem of thought and action, the problem of the relationship between knowledge and practice. Within "On Contradiction" that which is resolved is the problem of how to analyse objective concrete things; the problem from coming to find to coming to resolve the contradictions of concrete things.¹

Officially, these works are said to have been the lectures on philosophy that Mao delivered in Yan'an in 1937, though neither was published until the early 1950s. "On Practice" appeared in October 1951 as part of the first volume of Mao's Selected Works, and "On Contradiction" was initially published in March 1952, after Mao had made some substantial "additions, deletions, and revisions."² This statement on editing was intended to disguise the originality of the argument published in 1952. And this means that the political and ideological significance of back-dating is thus derivative from its more contemporary political situation. For it is only within the context of the period in which they were published, that the meaning and importance of these works is made clear.

"On Contradiction," which is clearly the more important of the two, as it sets the conceptual bounds to practice, is the categorical announcement of the

necessity of a Chinese road to socialism. It is the ideological underpinning, the theoretical prelude to the formal adoption of a new line. Here, it must first be noted that in 1951 the drafting of the First Five Year plan had already begun. In the fall of 1952 the Party had declared that the period of rehabilitation (which is how "New Democracy" came to be designated) would be over by the end of the year; and in June of 1952 Mao had stated that the landlord class had been vanquished, and that the principal contradiction in China was now between the working class and the bourgeoisie.³ It is evident then that the leadership was looking ahead, laying the foundation for a new historical stage. And indeed this was proclaimed in the fall of 1953, in the General Line of Transition.⁴ What "On Contradiction" did was to herald this by arguing that this was not merely politically justified, but was an ideological imperative.

In this, the concept of necessity was based upon the identification of essence with contradiction. Mao's starting point was the incorporation of the idea of the dialectic into a new universal category--the law of contradiction--whose definition supposed a specific realization. The premise of Marxist stance: "the law of contradiction in things, that is the unity of opposites, is the basic law of materialist dialectics"⁵ and its corollary, "that it is precisely in the particularity of contradiction that the universality resides"⁶ were meant to show that whatever the negation, that which would fall and that which would ascend would do so on Chinese ground.

Previously the concept of Sinification had been expressed through a general formula emphasizing the integration of Marxist truth with a specific practice; this is now both preserved and cancelled. The idea of synthesis is retained, but within this the notion of practice is lifted up so that it becomes the embodiment of that Marxist truth. In its general specificity practice now acquires the status of praxis, because the uniqueness of any situation is now to be understood as the requisite expression of universality.

To deny contradiction is to deny everything. That is the universal truth for all times and all countries, which admits no exception. Hence the general character, the absoluteness of contradiction. But this character is contained in every individual character, without individual character there can be no general character. If all individual character were removed what general character would remain?⁷

Thus the particular embodies that which was supposed in adaptation. Marxism is not merely an 'arrow hitting a target', the Chinese revolution is not the predicate of an external subject, rather the revolution is the subject because this is the meaning of Marxism. As Mao wrote in 1952,

Marx and Engels applied the law of contradiction in things to the study of the socio-historical process . . . they discovered how these contradictions inevitably lead to different kinds of social revolutions in different kinds of class society.⁸

This notion of a universal which revealed itself in a diversity of antinomies--for as Mao argued, difference was contradiction--sustained the principle of identity as it affirmed antithesis. The absorption of the axioms of the dialectic into the category of contradiction preserved the appellation of viewpoint as Marxist, as this overarching unity, while it asserted the necessity of opposition within a particular approach. The character of that which was enjoined as contrary was variable: it could either be antagonistic or not, but here, this requisite of another kind of political determination was really a modifier for the principle of a declaration of independence.

For the concept of embodiment truly to be grounded however, cause had to be internal. The intended stress on the maxim's other side, that as the particular revealed itself so it also made manifest the universal, required that the origin and effect of movement be located indigenously. Otherwise praxis could be understood as a recipient, as merely the distillation of external tenets. Hence Mao's statement that, "contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development, while its inter-relations and interaction with other things are secondary causes."⁹

The October Socialist Revolution ushered in a new epoch in world history as well as in Russian history. It exerted influence on internal changes in other countries in the world, and similarly in a profound way on the internal changes in China. These changes, however, were effected through the inner laws of development of these countries, China included.¹⁰

Others, Ai Siqi, for example, put this point more forcibly,¹¹ but this followed from what was as a thesis a landmark in Chinese political theory: the principle of internal causality as the logos of development established the postulate of the necessity for a specific praxis. The pragmatic element to political strategy--that success was dependent upon a particularistic understanding--was now subsumed under a categorical imperative so that each path to socialism was universally true.

This is not to suggest that suddenly there was no longer any architecture to the Chinese conception of Marxist theory. On the contrary, the fundamental laws governing process and standpoint: the mutual transformation of quality and quantity, the dependency of thought upon matter, etc., and the primary categorical terms of Marxist political economy: the base and the superstructure, the relations and the forces of production, all remained inviolable. What had changed with "On Contradiction" was their meaning within the designated dialectic of adaptation. For what could or had been seen as theoretical opposition was now superseded by a new logic of definition. Descriptive principles and rubrics still shaped the form of analytical content, but as the content was specifically determined so it in turn shaped the function of form. "The productive forces, practice, and the economic base generally play the principal and decisive role; whoever denies this," Mao says,

is not a materialist. But it must also be admitted that in certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principle and decisive role . . . this does not go against materialism; on the contrary, it avoids mechanical materialism and firmly upholds dialectical materialism.¹²

At another level, this constructed dance could not resolve the tension between form and content, since the scope of mutual interaction remained restricted. Whatever the variation in terms of political or positional significance, principles were a priori's which regulated practice. Concepts or hypotheses might alter, might be transformed through the activity of labor, but the rules systematizing the manifold representations of phenomena were permanently placed. This was of course the presupposition of this philosophy of synthesis; the affirmation of identity and authority could only be expressed through an immovable categorical praesidium. Hence, everything was to be viewed as in a state of process save for those transcendental dictums which asserted and anticipated all eventuality. This is why diversity could be nothing other than contradiction, for in this context other logical possibilities implied a dialectic between concepts and categories, which of its own necessity negated the assumption that intention could always be realized.

As was previously noted, Mao, in a commentary on Ai's Philosophy and Existence in 1938, had argued that there was no distinction between difference and contradiction. Whereas Ai had said that contradiction was a contingent relation, "when, for example, it happens that two certain things at the same time, in the same place together develop mutually exclusive functions, this constitutes a contradiction";¹³ Mao stresses that,

the reasoning that difference is not contradiction is incorrect. All the things and events of the world are different; under definite conditions all are contradictory, this causes difference to be contradiction. This then is that which is called a concrete contradiction.¹⁴

This point is specifically repeated in "On Contradiction," though in a less muddled form,¹⁵ so that from the beginning all phenomena are subsumed under a restrictive and overriding axiom. Once established, however, the analytic structure is then opened up through an elaborate classification system, which as it orders, extols the idea of internal complexity. The different states of an antinomy: the fundamental

contradiction, the principal contradiction and the principal aspect of contradiction, and its various combinable types, antagonistic and non-antagonistic, moved theoretical constructs ever inward. And this located cognition precisely where Mao wanted it, oriented toward the particular and upon those elements which comprised it or defined the character of any stage. The idea was to fix analysis within a definite territory, so that as the originality of labor could be reaffirmed, so its frontiers could also be bound.

The celebration of practice and its systematization in "On Practice" was not therefore a reception for empiricism, or for a philosophy of pragmatism, as one critic has argued.¹⁶ Indeed it does seem slightly extravagant to suggest that in allowing two major philosophical works to be published in the wake of an anti-empiricist campaign, Mao was either so divorced from his own political reality that he was unaware of the movements' tenets, or that he sought to repudiate it by embracing a conceptual mode completely at variance with Marxism. Though this is logically possible, a glance at "On Practice" and its thematic continuity within "On Contradiction" shows that this is not the case. First, as opposed to what is fundamental to an empiricist epistemology, Mao emphasizes that the constructs of thought are inextricably tied to a subject's social, political and economic circumstances; how one thinks is historically mediated. This, as was noted previously, is the basis of the Marxist concept of praxis.¹⁷ "In class society," Mao says, "everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking without exception is stamped with the brand of a class."¹⁸ Further, whatever the synthetic activity of labor, consciousness assumes or is directed to accept the essential nature of that which it will discover. "The real task of knowing," Mao argues, "is to arrive step by step at the internal contradictions of objective things, of their laws and of the internal relations between one process and another."¹⁹

Here, the guidebook providing the order for these laws and relations was of course "On Contradiction." Practice was crucial, as an idea it was the center-piece,

but this was true as praxis, as ideologically oriented action. The interest of reason in labor could not be separated from political intention. The injunction to learn from facts supposed a fixed referential context of a logic of political categories, which themselves were conceptualized as the line. Novel hypotheses did not, indeed could not, lead to a fundamental philosophical breakthrough since the situation of theory prevented its own reflection as to the applicability of its basic constructs. Therefore, to get around this tension, to preserve this political philosophy while encouraging a flexibility to approach, Mao distends the table of contradictions. Through division and subdivision, he widens the concept of totality so that each stage or moment is to be seen in terms of multifarious and interrelated complexes.

We who are engaged in the Chinese revolution should not only understand the particularity of these contradictions in their totality, that is, in their interconnections, but should also study the two aspects of each contradiction as the only means of understanding the totality. When we speak of understanding each aspect of a contradiction, we mean understanding what specific position each aspect occupies, what concrete forms it assumes in its interdependence and in its contradiction with its opposite, and what concrete methods are employed in the struggle with its opposite, when the two are both interdependent and in contradiction, and also after the interdependence breaks down.²⁰

This certainty was quite a task, but it did underline the idea of the originality of praxis; for the variety of antinomies required a reciprocal diversity in respect to the specific forms of resolution. As Mao stresses, "the principle of using different methods to resolve different contradictions is one which Marxist-Leninists must strictly observe."²¹

In setting out the matrix and components of contradiction--which was what Mao had spent the years refining--thereby focusing attention on internal development, he reaffirmed the principle of sovereignty. This is why "On Contradiction" is back-dated; it is a statement that the synthesis between Marxism and nationalism had been realized in praxis as early as 1937. In respect to the

political conditions at the time of publication, Mao looked back to revivify the Chinese people, as the leadership looked ahead.

To theorists, "On Contradiction" was a "revelation," as Qian Jiazhu kept reiterating,²² for it provided the basis through which analysis, in ordering its own phenomena, could also compare and contrast differing notions of process. Thus, as the work lifted Chinese practice to a higher level, so the theory itself was seen as a development of Marxism. Here, Ai's comments set the standard; and primarily what he argues is that whereas Lenin understood the fundamentals of the dialectic, Mao recognized their interior dynamic and relations of complexity. Lenin, Ai says, pointed out that all antithetical tendencies of a thing reside within, and that there are numerous kinds of connections between one thing and another. "Mao correctly brings these thoughts of Lenin into play; moreover Mao advances a step, stipulating the correct relationship between the internal contradiction and the external cause within the development of a thing."²³ Further, though "Lenin 'concisely defined dialectics as the theory of the unity of opposites,'" it was Mao who saw that "the contradictions of a thing are certainly not that of a simple concrete thing" since "all things possess relatively complex contradictions and relations."²⁴ This, Ai emphasizes, is why,

Comrade Mao's "On Contradiction" opens up the many principles of materialist dialectics, raising to the level of genius that which Mao has written concerning the use of dialectics. It all progresses a step in having developed Lenin's fundamental thoughts.²⁵

It is important to note the continuity of Marxist orthodoxy in Mao's theory. At the level of universal determinations his dictums were inherited from Lenin's assertions as to the meaning of the dialectic. In turn, Lenin's statements were drawn from an understanding of Hegel's Logic, and in particular, from an interpretation of the notions of Identity, Difference and Opposition in the book on

Essence. In this regard, what Mao takes over is Lenin's arrestation of the ascending dialectic at the category of polar opposition; at that point where Hegel had shown that a term could only be defined in respect to that to which it was contrasted. Briefly put, Hegel's argument was that for a thing to exist means that as it exists for itself it must of necessity be in a simultaneous state of interaction. No thing is a finite collection of internal properties contingently related to another, rather a something maintains itself in a causal context, is to be seen in relation to its other. This other is its negation, is that which would suppress it; and since this aspect is inseparable from a thing's own existence, each something has within in its own contradiction. This insight leads to the category of Ground, where Hegel attempts to show that the essence of the real is that it is the requisite embodiment of the logical Idea.²⁶

Now if this cannot be proved, or if the supposition that reality manifests a pure conceptual structure is denied, then, of course, the basis for the idea of universal contradiction is called into question. For there is apparently no philosophical necessity to see all contrastive relations as the embodiment of a deeper structure. This is after all what Ai had pointed out, and Mao had rejected. At the same time, neither Mao nor Lenin accepted Hegel's Logic as a successful proof, nor did they attempt one of their own, and, therefore, the rationale of contradiction dissolves into subjective intention. The idea that all phenomenal relations are dialectical is simply a political pronouncement. And here, the form of statement reified the idea of movement. A distinguishing characteristic of "On Contradiction"--indeed of contemporary Chinese political philosophy in general--is that the mode of presentation denied the tenets of method.

To make this clear it is necessary to recognize that it is virtually impossible to express a dialectical thought through a conceptual pattern where the subject is fixed in relation to its predicate. This is because the kind of understanding where

the content of information relates back and assumes--if only immediately--a firm foundation, is not truly adequate for an approach which insists that judgment be continuously pushed beyond itself, from an awareness of the antinomy inherent in any positive statement. In this, the effect of cause is mutual; that which is established gives way to a breakthrough, where ideas are turned against themselves, and thereby taken to their own limits.²⁷ In "On Contradiction," however, the axioms of process absorb the notion of conflict through declaration, so that in any period an idea is provided which explains and incorporates the course of contradiction within itself. The categorical subject never alters. What could be transformed was the definition of content, if, that is, an antinomy was announced as having been resolved, or a stage proclaimed as having been reached. Then the properties constituting a particular axiom might be judged to be substantively different. The precise meaning as to what was a principal contradiction clearly would change over time. Yet there always had to be this specific type of contradiction--"there is no doubt that at every stage in the developmental process, there is only one principal contradiction, which plays the leading role"²⁸--which was never revealed as incoherent nor was it ever superseded. New categories might be added, others temporarily dropped (the negation of the negation has a somewhat chequered history) but there was no spontaneous generation arising out of productive interaction. Save for the subjective decision of replacement, this discursive form lacked any other sense of implicit negation. Thus these categories could not inform a dialectical approach, since at the level of theory in itself they were, as ossified assertions, the predicate of purpose. This is the other reason why there could not be a dialectic between concepts and categories, because these principles were undialectically conceived.

Therefore, this political philosophy contradicted its own procedural assumptions, or that which it ought to have had, if it were dialectical. And in so doing, it left itself unaware of the radical alteration of the relationship between

subject and object. For it is clear that in this Marxist theory change was not mutual, rather it was restricted to phenomena, and as long as consciousness was correctly guided, it remained secure. And therefore the idea of a plan in its formation did not recognize mediate relations; on the contrary, matter was seen simply as the passive object of labor. The concept of objectification was thus confused and assimilated into the notion of productive goals. Two antinomic meanings came to be defined as synonymous. This meant that a theory which attempted to administer and to absorb diversity necessarily rigidified a leadership belief in complete domination. Voluntarism was inbuilt, and here it found itself in unintended consequence. For a logic which sought to capture the dialectic in a classification system could not but continuously surrender to its real manifestations arising out of synthesis. In its own terms--excluding that is the panoply of symbols and devices used to initiate and maintain a mobilization--the poverty of this philosophy was that as it denied its own governing propositions, it deceived itself into assuming that intention was sufficient to control result. Though this was a political requisite, at the very minimum this kind of assurance supposed another type of conceptual system or metaphysic. As it stood, this philosophy was without a reflexive basis from which it was possible to grasp the dynamic in praxis. And it is a striking point that the political history of the Chinese Communist Party from the seizure of power until the death of Mao, is one of miscarried and dislocated movements. A heritage, where each demanded process revealed a conflicting and unanticipated complexity, such that ambitious pronouncements soon gave way to reactive declarations which either revised, redirected, or abandoned a campaign. The Hundred Flowers, the Great Leap, the Socialist Education Movement, the Cultural Revolution, and the Criticism of Confucius, all testify to this. Not once does a plan or an operation succeed in the time and manner allotted to it. Instead, as the realization of failed effect, the dialectic occurred behind the leadership's back. Thus the constant demand throughout this period for a rectifying and instrumentally responsible theory was

bound to be repeatedly disappointed by a somewhat inarticulate response, since the rationale of this revolutionary philosophy--in all respects--did not permit its critical trespass across a formed political line. The chasm between is and ought could not be bridged purely by an announced desire.

In all of this there was of course a strong suggestion of a principle of identity. Clearly, in one sense it was always there: as it was necessary to explain and justify how the idea of socialism could continuously be realized in a praxis which antedated its stated material requisites, so the tenets of "On Contradiction"--and those of Chinese political philosophy in general--had to be understood as the embodiment of the telos of history. But then what was consciousness aware of, what was it supposed to be aware of, other than the working out of these Marxist determinations? That which was objective, the ground for existence, seemed simply to be the substance for active proof, and hence the material for self-affirmation. Given the real assumption of method as preconceived knowledge of essence, it appeared that there was little that was left of the object which could restrict or alter the subject, aside from what remained in the aftermath of misconception. And here this problem concerning the intended nature of reflection was compounded by Mao's very adoption of the law of identity to categorize one aspect of the relation between opposites. In turn, this maxim was based on Lenin's confused identification of unity with identity. "All contradictory things," Mao writes,

are interconnected; not only do they coexist in a single entity in given conditions, but in other given conditions, they also transform themselves into each other. This is the full meaning of the identity of opposites. This is what Lenin meant when he discussed how they happen to be (how they become) identical--under what conditions they are identical, transforming themselves into one another.²⁹

As examples, Mao gives: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, ruler and ruled, life and death, and war and peace.

The concept of identity as a realized state of contradiction was, of course, a familiar argument. What was relatively new, however, was the belief that change was cyclical: the theory of the dialectic as continuous substitution. This meant that while contradictions were still understood as their own subjects, their resolution was to be seen as occurring through a functional exchange, rather than through a simple negation. The negative, therefore, in its movement from affirmation to negation back to affirmation (peace, war, peace . . .) thus retained a sense of complete identity, whereas later, in the theory of the "affirmation of the negation," it was transformed into a void to be conquered.

At the same time, it should be pointed out that Mao's theory of identity was here marginal to the central thesis of "On Contradiction." This is because contradictions were basically defined in terms of their internal constituents, as the "unity of opposites." It was with respect to this condition and not as a statement concerning an achieved moment that Mao set out his notions on identity. The problem was that rather than explain his theory of identity with respect to this internal condition, he turned his analysis into a discussion of a series of states. But this was far from clear. And it is because this theory was so ambiguously defined as both state and condition, that China's theorists were able to avoid the whole issue of what Mao meant. In other words, Mao's argument was accepted, and it was pushed aside. When, for example, Ai was asked to clarify the role of struggle within identity, his response was merely to reiterate the gallimaufry of Mao's explanation; there was no attempt either to refine or to bring out, however subtly, some of the difficulties and consequences inherent in this interpretation.³⁰ This is not to suggest that Mao's readership remained unaware of an alternative and equally orthodox approach to this question. For in 1955, Yang Junrui pointed out in Philosophical Research that the Soviet editors of A Concise Philosophical Dictionary (Jianming Zhexue Cidian), one of whom was Malenkov, had rejected

most of Mao's argument, particularly his illustrations--though without of course reference to him. "Some people," they say,

mistakenly apply Marxism's principle of identity to some phenomena which are in fundamental opposition. For example--some say that war and peace are in identity. Others say that under the capitalist system, the capitalist class and the proletariat are in identity, etc., . . . phenomena such as war and peace, the capitalist class and the proletariat, life and death, etc., are not able to be in identity, because they are in fundamental opposition and are mutually exclusive.³¹

This recognition of a critical difference over interpretation did not lead to any substantive comment. Instead, and in reply to Yang's query: 'why the Soviet denial', the editors of Philosophical Research merely stated that the problem deserved further study.³²

What is important to note here is that though perhaps expected, Yang's assumption that Mao was correct underlined a confidence in Chinese political theory which had been missing before "On Contradiction." The former, somewhat ambiguous position of theory, the lack of a clear referential basis, caused primarily by the acceptance of a seemingly negative definition of national course, where uniqueness, or "New Democracy," was the necessary expression of extreme underdevelopment, had now been superseded by an ideology which could celebrate and justify its own Marxist standards. In this, the center-piece was, of course, the 'unity of opposites'; the essence of the dialectic as Mao had put it. For, above all else this meant that within the shared identity of socialism, paths could--indeed had to--diverge, could seemingly be in opposition to or contradict certain kinds of expectations. And as this emblem of indigenous Marxism laid the basis for Chinese construction, so did it also crystallize the more immediate domestic policy of a 'united front' under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore, irrespective of the imprecision and philosophical incoherence which truly characterize "On Contradiction," it fulfilled the declared function of representing or 'reflecting' its

historical moment. It provided both the theoretical architecture for development in general, and the structure for the consciousness of each specific practice.

The idea of unity was of course immanently tied to a principle of contradiction. And it was the working out of the nature of the antinomies both within the economy and the polity, which dominated the writings and controversies in the initial period of transition. In effect, Chinese Marxist theory was asked to begin again (only now, perhaps, at a higher level) with the basic question as to the character of this new present. Mao had declared a discursive independence through "On Contradiction" and "On Practice," which had been concretized and endorsed in the "General Line of Transition to Socialism." But the meaning of the relationship between stage and telos, the clarification of phenomena within the discontinuity caused by development--itself understood as part of an historical continuum--was far from clear. What, for example, was the character of the base and of the superstructure in this period? How was capitalism to be understood: could it be seen as offering some positive contribution or not? What was the basis of the agricultural sector: was it basically comprised of individual peasants, or was it primarily small commodity-producing? In short, how was all this to be seen, and what was to be done?

There were of course historical antecedents, past experiences, to draw from in terms of paradigms or models for approach. The whole period of the NEP, and the era of War Communism, provided an archive for reference, recommendation, and intellectual support. But in this new moment, theoretical reception presupposed a logic for specificity, a substantive interpretation and reinterpretation of all existing and inherited concepts. This is what "On Contradiction" set out: the categorical field for the particular form of reason.

Notes

- 1 Qian Jizhu, "Du 'Maodun lun'--lianxi daodui Zhongguo zichanjieji de renshi wenti" ("Reading 'On Contradiction' in connection with the problem of China's capitalist class"), in Ai Siqu, ed., Xuexi Maodun Lun (Study "On Contradiction"), 2 vols. 1 vol., p. 97.
- 2 Cf., Stuart Schram, "Mao Tse-tung and the Theory of Permanent Revolution 1958-1969," China Quarterly, 1971, no. 46, April/June, pp. 221-243; Karl Wittfogel, "Some Remarks on Mao's Handling of Concepts and Problems of Dialectics," Studies in Soviet Thought, vol. 3, no. 4, December 1963, pp. 251-277.
- 3 Mao Zedong, "The Contradiction Between the Working Class and the Bourgeoisie Is the Principal Contradiction in China," Selected Works, vol. 5, Foreign Language Press, 1977, p. 311.
- 4 In June 1953, Mao stated that, "the general line or the general task of the Party for the transition period is basically to accomplish the industrialization of the country and the socialist transformation of agriculture, handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce in ten to fifteen years, or a little longer." Selected works, vol. 5, p. 93.
- 5 Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," Selected Works, vol. 1, Foreign Language Press, 1977, p. 311.
- 6 Ibid., p. 316.
- 7 Ibid., p. 330.
- 8 Ibid., p. 328,
- 9 Ibid., p. 313.
- 10 Ibid., p. 314.
- 11 "The October Revolution did not directly determine the development of the Chinese Revolution," Ai writes; "rather it occurred as an effect which passed through the movement of contradiction within each class of Chinese society. Therefore not to analyze the contradictory movement of each class of Chinese society seriously, and simply to rely on the one causal aspect of the October Revolution makes it impossible completely to understand the Chinese Revolution. Marxists recognize that a revolution is not imported, but is a matter for the people of each country themselves; it just has this kind of significance." Ai Siqu, "Cong 'Maodun Lun' kan bianzhengfa de lijie he yunyong" (The understanding and application of dialectics in light of 'On Contradiction'), in Ai, ed., Xuexi Maodun lun, vol. 1, p. 8.
- 12 Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," p. 336.

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- 13 Ai Siqi, "Guan xingshi louji he bianzheng luoji," ("Concerning formal logic and dialectical logic"), in Ai Siqi, Zhexue he shenghuo, p. 31.
- 14 Mao Zedong, "Ai zhu 'Zhexue he shenghuo' zhailu" ("Extracts from Ai's Philosophy and Existence"), Zhongguo Zhexue, p. 29.
- 15 Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," pp. 317-318.
- 16 See Benjamin Schwartz, "The Philosopher," in David Wilson, ed., Mao Tse-Tung in the Scales of History, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 29; and "Thoughts on Mao Tse-Tung," The New York Review of Books, February 8, 1973, esp. pp. 26-28.
- 17 Cf., Charles Taylor, "Marxism and Empiricism," in Alan Montefiore and Bernard Williams, eds., British Analytic Philosophy, London: Kegan Paul, 1967, pp. 65-87.
- 18 Mao Zedong, "On Practice," Selected Works, Vol. 1, Foreign Language Press, Beijing, 1977, p. 296.
- 19 Ibid., p. 298.
- 20 Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," p. 323.
- 21 Ibid., p. 322.
- 22 Qian Jiazhong, "Du 'Maodun lun'--lianxi daodui Zhongguo zhichanjieji de renshi wenti," pp. 97-122 ad. passim.
- 23 Ai Siqi, "Guanyu xingshi luoji he bianzheng luoji," p. 7.
- 24 Ibid., p. 9.
- 25 Ibid., p. 18.
- 26 For a more complete discussion and analysis see Charles Taylor, Hegel, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- 27 This point has been influenced by Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hegel and the Dialectic of the Ancient Philosophers," in Hans-George Gadamer, Hegel's Dialectic; and by Theodor Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, trans. E. B. Ashton, 1973.
- 28 Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," p. 332.
- 29 Ibid., p. 340.
- 30 "Wenti Jieda," Xuexi, 1952, No. 6, p. 7.

31 "Guanyu 'Zhongguo guodu shiqi de jianjinxing feiyue' yiwen de taolun" (A discussion concerning the gradual leap in China's transitional period"), Zhexue yanjiu, vol. 4, 1955, p. 155.

32 Ibid., p. 155

CHAPTER 5

THE INTERESTS OF REASON: THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

The dominant theoretical question in the first period of transition was, in fact, the most fundamental: how was this transition to be understood? Having arrived at a new and higher stage, the concern of Party intellectuals was to explore its meaning; to define the character of this, their, political economy. And though the issue was basic, thereby inviting, almost demanding a variety of response; in the end, it was the two primary and contesting paradigms that were offered by the philosophers Ai Siqu and Yang Xianchen that both summarized and incorporated the diverse and contending views as to where China was, and how it could and should achieve socialism. Thus an account of the codification of particularism, the grounding of condition, quite properly begins here with an analysis of the arguments of Ai and Yang.

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Yang saw the base as a unity; as a whole constructed from the sum of its parts--its productive relations. "The theory of the sum total of the relations of production is that there are all kinds of productive relations, and these co-exist at the same time."¹ In turn each productive relation was composed of three aspects: the form of ownership over the means of production, and the method of exchange and of distribution. But in themselves these did not constitute a separate or quasi-independent system; irrespective of difference or complexity, each productive sector was simply an element within the general order. "Within a society," he writes,

where the exploiters have not yet vanished, the "base" itself just has the character of synthesis. To deny the character of synthesis to the

transitional period is without basis, because Marx was very clear that the base was the social economic form. And the social economic form is the sum total of the productive relations. And is not the sum total synthesis?²

If Marx is supposed to be the arbiter, the answer is no. Marx was writing from the stance of capitalism, analyzing its dialectical underpinnings. In this he makes it clear that in its beginning phase capitalism contained pre-capitalist economic formations. But as there had been a qualitative change in the dominant mode of production, these 'unsurmounted remains' only survived in a transfigured way.

Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allows insights into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along within . . . since bourgeois society is itself only a contradictory form of development, relations derived from early forms will often be found within it only in an entirely stunted form, or even travestied. For example, communal property.³

In other words, Marx's emphasis on the dynamic of continuity and discontinuity, his promised dictum of ineluctable economic change and conflict, had little in common with Yang's view of a static, integrated economy of equal parts.

As China's economy had been officially characterized in terms of five productive relations, it was these forms which Yang understood to be the base. "In the end," he says, "the social economic formation of our transitional economy is constituted from five kinds of economic sectors."⁴ And quoting from the Seventh Plenum of the Seventh Party Congress he lists them as: (1) the socialist system of the state owned economy, (2) the co-operative or semi-socialist system of ownership, (3) the capitalist system of private ownership, (4) the system of individual ownership, (5) state capitalism.

This is where he sees China to be at present. Concerning the achievement of socialism, Yang thinks that the key lies in the extraordinary potential of the

peasantry; particularly in their ability to forge a creative alliance with state industry. Indeed he goes so far as to see this sector--which he also refers to as the individual peasant economy--as the 'basis for socialist construction'. "In the practice of the transitional period, small agriculture must be the foundation of the socialist state."⁵ "Lenin and Stalin," he says,

were very clear on this point. That in the transitional period, before collectivization, to build a socialist economic basis meant uniting agriculture and industry into one integrated economy; subordinating agriculture to the leadership of socialist industry or using the products of large-scale industry to exchange for the products of the peasants. This agriculture referred to is individual agriculture; and the peasants referred to naturally are individual peasants, not a collectivized peasantry.⁶

This celebration of the pre-collectivized peasantry is somewhat odd in light of what followed in the Soviet Union. And of course regardless of historical circumstance, it is strange to find a Marxist panegyric to the peasantry. But it is perhaps less mystifying when it is made clear that for Yang existence implies acceptance. Thus, the peasantry, the largest sector in the economy ("quite clearly," he writes, "straight through till today, within our agriculture, individual agriculture still occupies the tendential force")⁷ had to be the foundation of what he considered an integrated economy. The predominant part of the whole had to be understood as the basis of that whole. To suggest otherwise would be to move from appearance to essence, to move, in a Marxist sense, toward an emphasis upon antagonism and contradiction. But in turn, this would undermine Yang's principle of synthesis where things were as they were supposed to be.

It helps to understand that Yang's world-view is rooted in the fundamental axioms of materialism. He believes that matter is both prior to and independent of human awareness, and that the laws of nature are completely distinct from the laws of history.

"Matter" or objectively existing reality is separate and independent from human consciousness. It does not change according to human

will. The law is that which affirms a thing in itself [is that which makes a thing what it is]. Hence the law also is objective, is independent of human consciousness, and does not change according to human will.⁸

For Yang, this premise of the sovereignty of nature is a unique truth. It divides materialism from all other philosophical systems, and, indeed, stands as their repudiation. Thus metaphysics (taken as plural singular) is to be seen as inverting the real; substituting subject for object. "Idealists," he says,

consider thought and existence to be an identical thing. Matter is only an "assembled concept," or a "complex sensation"; the world is only what I make manifest. Consequently outside of myself, it's not possible for other people to exist.⁹

This is of course nonsense. And to reduce the varied and, at times, brilliant forms of idealism to aspects of Berkeleian philosophy simply eclipses reason. But the point here is that stripped of exaggeration, Yang is restating a basic tenet of materialist orthodoxy: the idea that in attributing a telos or subjective intention to nature, metaphysical thought necessarily denies objectivity to the real world. In this, the principles of materialism, grounded, as it is declared, in the real become for Yang nothing more than the rational expression of immediately recognizable truth.

That is to say, we must honestly recognize the world as it is, by its true colors: is thus is, not thus is not; the earth just is the earth, to have just is to have, to be without just is to be without. Idealism, on the other contrary, does not firmly recognize a thing; that which is without, it fabricates to bring about. It reverses is and not, confuses black and white, makes something out of nothing, and creates fictions: calling a horse a deer, this sort of thing.¹⁰

This is embarrassing. And as a concept it fits, if anywhere, within the rubric of naive materialism; having, that is, little in common with the professions for the dialectic of materialism. Yang's understanding of the subject-object relation suggests two removed and self-contained spheres; where nature is not only independent but somehow stands apart. What is missing is that sense of interaction and mutual change which is the essence of the dialectic. In other words, in the

language of Marxism, Yang lacks a concept of praxis. It is one thing to emphasize endlessly the priority of matter, and the inviolate character of natural laws; and another to explore the possibility that through labor men may change both nature and themselves.

He does, on occasion, allude to this. In his book, The Struggle Between the Communist World-View and the World View of Subjective Idealism, he discusses the notion of labor dynamically, as that which distinguishes human beings.

Humans are a particular type of living animal within the natural world. This is because humans have the ability to labor, the ability to create instruments, the ability to be engaged in productive activity . . . that is to say humans have the use of subjective capability.¹¹

But in terms of his political and philosophical analysis this concept had no meaning. It simply remained a statement of accepted principle. Thus, almost by default, his epistemological stance turned into a 'mirror theory' of reflection, where things were as they seemed. Since appearance was equivalent to essence, the task for consciousness became that of creating a correspondence between itself and its objects. The point, Yang says, is "definitely to make our subjective world capable of reflecting the objective world, to be able to achieve a unity between subject and object."¹²

In this, accord is more than validation of the real in the face of Berkeleian objections, it is the valorization of that real, as it exists. Knowledge is the representation in reason of empirical data interpreted within a specific vocabulary. This ocularcentric theory did presuppose the ideological setting of Marxism-Leninism, but this did nothing more than guarantee true vision. Thus when Yang insists that "subjective dialectics are a reflection of objective dialectics,"¹³ it is not simply that this is completely meaningless; it is also that he turns a respect for objectivity into reverence, thereby reducing consciousness to a gaze. Thought

adapts through the subservient vindication of that which it observes. "For example," he says,

in newswork, facts are primary, the report is secondary. In medical work, sickness is primary, the prescription is secondary. In artistic work, life is primary, and creation is secondary . . . in economic work, factory conditions (including equipment, machines) are primary the plan secondary.¹⁴

This does rather dispense with the idea that men create their own instruments of production, but the point here is that Yang assumes that his analogies may be drawn for every sphere since the principle is ineluctable: the intellect literally reflects.

The theory of the synthetic base was then the almost 'inevitable' result of collation; the sum pieced together from observation. But though this notion was the product of a peculiar philosophical reasoning, with respect to political analysis, Yang was not--or most certainly did not feel himself to be--alone. As was noted earlier, he found a comrade in Lenin; particularly the Lenin of the early stages of the NEP; the one who wrote "On Co-Operation." And this perceived commonality created a point upon which Yang was quite insistent: that there was a strong parallel between China's contemporary moment and that of the Soviet Union in the early twenties; and that therefore Lenin's theories and policies remained appropriate for China.

In "On Co-Operation" Lenin argued that since the working class firmly controlled the means of production and monopolized political power, the basis of agricultural production should be peasant co-operatives. These voluntary institutions, which he had previously labeled as 'petty-bourgeois', but had now been raised to: 'a third type of commercial enterprise', were seen as the foundation for socialism.

The power of the state over all large-scale means of production; political power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured proletarian leadership of the peasantry, etc.--is this not all that is necessary to build a completely socialist society out of co-operatives; out of co-operatives alone which we formerly ridiculed

as huckstering . . . it is still not the building of socialist society, but it is all that is necessary and sufficient for it.¹⁵

It is not clear how serious Lenin was about this. As Moshe Lewin notes, Lenin had a tendency to connect the idea of socialism to any pressing task, in order to motivate the populace.¹⁶ For example, when electrification was the target, socialism was defined as 'Soviet power plus electrification'. And so it is possible to see the identification of socialism with co-operatives as an exaggerated attempt to mobilize the peasantry.

Yang of course saw this rather differently; he took Lenin's words as a cardinal offering for the transitional strategy.

Lenin's theory of co-operativization was the guiding principle for the movement of the laboring peasants towards socialism. It was the most important ideological weapon of the Party and the government in the work of advancing the socialist transformation of the small peasant economy. It was the basis of the Party's policy towards the peasants.¹⁷

Critically, Yang argues that underlying Lenin's conceptualization is the affirmed tenet of synthesis, the belief in the seemingly inviolate link between sectors. It is this which permits a somewhat blithe attitude toward these non-compulsory peasant organizations. Otherwise, in the sense of real class struggle, they would have to be seen as potentially counter-revolutionary, demanding supersession through, for example, collectivization. "Lenin," Yang writes, "recognized that within the enterprise of socialist construction, the principle of the socialist transformation is that the organizational parts cannot be split."¹⁸

Since Yang also assumed the axiom of state cohesion, it appeared obvious that China's peasantry should equally serve as the rallying point for the transition. With power secure this now non-threatening class could be trusted to support all state efforts. Moreover for Yang, Lenin's tolerance of self-interest among the peasantry seemingly endorsed a somewhat static view of them. Co-operatives offered a gradual controlled process, in which personal gain could be combined

with the overall good of the collective. Their value was that they were not an imperative for quick change. "Lenin," Yang writes,

considered that in the transition to socialism, all co-operative systems, especially the agriculture system, were the easiest form for the individual peasant to receive and understand. This is because it is the situation under which personal advantage follows the collective benefit. It is the best form to unite private interest with that of the whole.¹⁹

This theme of social assembly, of state control which mitigates conflict, was in turn extended by Yang to the private and semi-private capitalist sector. As with peasant co-operatives, so the policy toward industry was to be characterized by a mixed form--a state capitalism--where ultimately profit and activity would be a state determination.

Under China's specific conditions, to go through the various forms of state capitalism to transform capitalist industry, the first step is gradually to turn capitalist industries into state capitalist enterprises. Second, it is gradually to turn state capitalist enterprises into socialist enterprises . . . our present policy towards capitalist industry of 'utilize, restrict and transform' . . . is the concrete utilization in China of the policy which Lenin pointed out concerning state capitalism.²⁰

In arguing that rural policy should be seen in terms of the requirements of the peasantry; in particular, the individual peasant, and that industry should adopt a state capitalist form, Yang felt that he had captured the essence of Lenin's transitional program. Conceptually, and without explicit recognition, he was also following the line of Bukharin. Though Yang did not talk of 'ultimately riding into socialism on the backs of the rich peasantry'; and though he did not discuss Bukharin's theory of 'proportional development', the emphasis upon the principle of equilibrium, the down-grading of class-struggle, and the idea of a 'third form' of production, placed Yang broadly within the Bukharinist approach. And, in this, in historically parallel fashion, Yang shares in an interpretation which separates Lenin from the later history of collectivization.²¹

This, in turn, suggests an evolution in Chinese political discourse; where the former understanding of Soviet history as a paradigm is now superseded by a view which sees this past somewhat more discretely; as relatively independent moments, each providing a direct source for recommendation. Whatever Yang's intellectual limitations (and they are serious), he could not possibly have been unaware of the Stalinist collectivization campaign. Yet he simply ignores it, since it does not suit his argument. That he does so might strain reason (though this is not necessary), but it also indicates the lifting of any sense of prohibition to do otherwise. The logic which salvages Lenin by divorcing him from later practice--irrespective of primary intention--is here founded upon an analysis which defines all of the Soviet past as so much data for conceptual support. It is a reason which has with confidence moved beyond one particular form of categorical imperative. Therefore, though Yang's analysis was clearly out of the mainstream in respect to Soviet orthodoxy, this created no political problem for him in China. The discursive territory had shifted.

To make this more clear, it is helpful and important to move, as it were, to the other side of the controversy over the nature of the base and the superstructure; that is, to the contentions of Ai Siqu.

Yang legitimized his reality through circular reasoning: what is, should be; and it should be, because it is. Thus, the present floated as a sort of permanent tense. For Ai, all moments were historically conditional; factors within an ongoing process. Within this flux, there was, nevertheless, a center of gravity, an epistemological standard which created order, and indeed gave meaning to existence. This was the transcendent idea of socialist construction; the first principle of theory and practice, which in turn provided the a priori of discourse. The premise of the socialist transformation was then the ground for his Marxist reasoning, the grid for classification.

Thus all events could be broken up, decoded in terms of a contingent relation, as to whether or not a given phenomenon aided or obstructed the transition to socialism. Value was specifically defined in respect to what aided the future. This meant that to Ai questions concerning the character of the base could neither be general nor all inclusive. Analysis would not attempt to sum up a moment through the synthesis of the various aspects of an economy; instead, stance, expressing the presumptions of socialism, would reflect upon itself and dictate exclusion. When Ai asks,

what does our State have as its own economic base? Is it formed simultaneously of the four different systems of ownership, or is it formed only of the productive relations of the system of whole people ownership, and the system of collective ownership that are being established?;

his question is not what exists; rather, what exists for the possibility of socialism ("Who are our friends and who are our enemies?").²²

This temporal dualism as to what should and should not be, meant that while capitalism and the individual peasant economy were part of the transitional period, for Ai, they were not part of the base. "In order to demonstrate the thesis that the individual peasant economy and the capitalist system also form the base of our regime," Ai writes,

Yang places the emphasis of his argument on our regime's considerate care and arrangement for these economic factors at the present stage, instead of emphasizing the point that the main task of our lines and policies is to reform and destroy these economic factors.²³

In order to utilize the productive forces of capitalism, it was necessary, as a matter of policy, to make adequate arrangements and show adequate concern for its productive relations, but it would be a mistake to think that this amounts to regarding capitalist relations as our own economic base.²⁴

To Yang, of course, this is simply inexplicable; for it seems as if Ai, from the start, excludes the obvious: that which is out there. This is why Yang asks the

rhetorical question, 'how do socialists eat'; do they not depend upon the very produce of the peasants whom they are attempting to ignore?²⁵ But for Ai this is an equally fatuous question, because it is empirical; whereas his concern is with the realization of an idea. "In order to have food," Ai says,

we must, at the beginning, rely mainly on the support of the individual peasants; and in order to win the support of the individual peasants, it was necessary to encourage their enthusiasm for production, and to give them all kinds of aid, including loans . . . does this amount to making the individual the socialist economic base? No. They are completely different things. We help the individual peasants mainly for the purpose of obtaining temporarily material supplies from their productivity, and not because we want to consolidate and develop their productive relations. The economic base means productive relations [emphasis added].²⁶

This restriction of the concept of the base to the relations of production was critical; it provided the theoretical justification for the idea of China's socialist transition. In tying the definition of the economy to a political or administrative situation; that is, to the state of the productive relations, Ai removed the axiomatic fetter which bound the concept of a socialist or non-capitalist base to an achieved level of productivity. In effect, he reversed the hierarchy of determinants by shifting the emphasis to the top, to the polity. This means that ultimately economic development would, of necessity, be guided or conditioned by the political structure. In short, by offering an interpretation of the base which excepted the forces of production and technique, Ai was attempting to explain how socialist relations could precede economic underdevelopment, and how these relations could continue to direct the course of the economy.

Intellectually, there was little that was new here. Ai had offered the same definition of the base in his 1935 criticism of the Bukharinist inspired Soviet textbook on political economy. But, in response to Yang, he now turns to the later writings of Stalin, in particular Marxism and Linguistics and Economic Problems in the Soviet Union, for further support. It is in these works that Stalin provides the ideological justification for the Bolshevik Revolution (and for subsequent policies)

as well as for those other Marxist revolutions which might occur in conditions of economic deprivation.

Stalin's presumption--which Ai shares--is that the base includes nothing more than the relations of production; it mediates the effect of the forces of production.²⁷ In terms of Marxist canon, this principle is original to Stalin; and it clearly differs from the more expansive view of Engels, for example, where the economy meant everything associated with production, including geography. As Engels wrote, "by economic relations, which we regard as the determining basis of the history of society, we understand the entire technique of production and transport . . . also the geographical basis on which they operate. . . ." ²⁸

This is not to suggest that Stalin dispensed with the critical role of the productive forces. He did pay homage to their creative and revolutionary significance. But in this, the force of determinism was tempered by that of possibility. It was no longer the case that revolutions or revolutionary events--collectivization, for example--occurred as the result of an achieved level of productivity; they now occurred when the Party recognized a moment in terms of its potential. This, according to Stalin, made manifest the law whereby the relations of production needed to conform to the character of the productive forces. Since 'character' was determined subjectively, by the leadership, or leader, this was not, of course, a normative law at all; it was simply a slogan which could justify any action or assertion.

"Relying on the economic law that the relations of production must necessarily conform with the character of the productive forces," Stalin wrote,

the Soviet government socialized the means of production, made them the property of the whole people, and thereby abolished the exploiting system and created socialist forms of economy. Had it not been for this law, and had the Soviet government not relied on it, it could not have accomplished its mission.²⁹

Stalin's narrow definition of the base, and his revivification of the superstructure was precisely what Ai needed to hear. It provided orthodox support for what became a fortress-like conception of the socialist base in the time of transition. The reduction of the economy to its productive relations meant that Ai could, in effect, regroup the various forms of ownership into the two competing fiefdoms of socialism and capitalism. "The economy of the transition period," he writes,

is transitional . . . because the socialist base is only in the course of formation. In its midst there still exists the capitalist economic base, though this base is steadily declining and dying. Therefore it should be said that during transition periods there exist in fact two antagonistic bases: the socialist and the capitalist base.³⁰

In this, non-socialist economies, or non-socialist forms of ownership, stood in relation to the socialist economies as productive forces, as instruments of production. The practical reasoning of Ai's political economy meant that these anti-socialist economies were defined in terms of their use-value. The socialist base drew and would continue to draw from them upon the criterion of need.

Before the capitalist system of ownership, and the system of individual ownership are destroyed we, on the one hand, must reform "by all possible means" their productive relations; while, on the other, we must also utilize their productive relations wherever possible . . . not everything which we can and must manage is the economic base of our state regime, and only that which we have to form and to consolidate can be our own economic base.³¹

This was a neat, though somewhat one-sided formulation. The designation of non-socialist economies as, at best, technical forces, clearly did not imply a dialectic between these two bases. There was no idea here of mutual change as a consequence of mutual interaction. The question for Ai was instead how best to contain, administer, and transform.

In this instrumental definition of value, Ai's argument brought out an important point concerning the mode of China's theoretical discourse. This was

that analysis tended to conceptualize in the same way as it had been conceived. It viewed as it was viewed. Consciousness stated more than its understanding of an external real, it also made manifest the conditions for the expression of that real. In the act of enunciation, every declaration of reason acknowledged the ground of political necessity which had been incorporated from the beginning; from, that is, the genesis of its ideas.

Amongst other mental and natural phenomena, political philosophy had a place; only here location was a state prerogative. Authoritarian pronouncements: the line, statements by Mao or by someone else in the elite, provided the field for knowledge and for the articulation of experience. As it shaped, so it clearly restrained reason. The acceptable bounds of criticism was not a socially determined convention, it was a formal political fact. Thus, every statement, irrespective of its specific intent--whatever the claim, for example, concerning the nature of the superstructure--reinforced a hierarchy of order, a vertical sedimentation of power. In this, philosophical notions always mirrored themselves in their own reflections.

Grounded, this meant that unless there was a faction within the leadership which declared the superstructure to be in present danger (the need for constant vigilance against capitalist restoration was given as a permanent aspect) Party political theorists were not sufficiently independent to be able to question the stability of the regime.

And this puts Ai in a bind; it forces him into holding two contradictory positions. On the one side, he argues that, relatively speaking, the superstructure is basically solid, and that the state is in control of non-socialist activity. On the other side, he argues that class struggle is rife, and that a capitalist revival is a distinct possibility.

Thus in support of the latter position, for example, he writes: "the socialist superstructure does not exist alone, and its building is not all plain sailing; but goes on amidst a life and death struggle against factors of the capitalist superstructure."³²

This means that it is critically important to be vigilant in the fight against "those capitalist class elements who firmly oppose the socialist transformation; who still promote all kinds of destructive schemes to the point that they vainly dream of conspiracies to destroy the Party."³³ At the same time, he argues that "our state regime is essentially a socialist superstructure,"³⁴ and, that this "political superstructure, i.e., our state regime, is more or less consolidated at present."³⁵ This, of course, explains the success of the state's policy of 'restrict, utilize, and transform'.

Can we say that we have achieved consolidation because, while relying on our socialist economy, we also rely on the capitalist system? I do not think we can. True, in the present transition period we have also utilized capitalism and it has done us good. But does utilization amount to dependence? Of course it does not . . . our proletarian regime is increasingly consolidated . . . through the development of the socialist economy and the fulfillment of the socialist transformation of capitalist industry and commerce, and agriculture and handicrafts.³⁶

Here, it must be made clear, that above the antinomy between conflict and order was the overarching imperative, the transcendent need for Ai to insist that the superstructure was both socialist and whole. It was this point which gave meaning to the state's existence in the transition period. As a Party theorist then, Ai had to link socialist essence with state achievement, since this legitimized all administrative policy throughout this transformational moment. The entire edifice of justifying the present through a future oriented idea--made manifest in the vocabulary of construction--required the nomenclature of socialism. Without this, the category of transition was meaningless; and in terms of stages this would still be the period of "New Democracy."

In addition, the idea of a socialist superstructure did help to establish the concept of a real socialist base. Since the logic of Marxist terminology dictated that a socialist superstructure arose from a socialist base, the existence of the former implied (theoretically, at least) some form of the latter.

Yet, emotionally and intellectually, Ai does seem somewhat uncomfortable with a sanguine approach toward contradiction, and instead, appears in philosophical stride when he is able to portray the superstructure in bleak and bitter terms, under siege from within and without. And the reason for this was in part personal; what might be seen as the after-effect of rectification.

In the early 1950s, Ai had been criticized by Chen Boda, amongst others, for arguing that capitalist elements could play a positive role in the superstructure.³⁷ This contention, which was made during the period of "New Democracy," did little more than echo the Common Program. As the economy was seen officially in terms of a complex set of interactive productive relations under the direction of a proletarian dictatorship, it seemed logical to assume that capitalist logic could contribute to the developmental process. To Chen (whose own philosophical shortcomings Ai had pointed out in the late 1930s), this was a dangerous vacillation; it kept, he said, a 'foot in both doors'.³⁸

By the mid-1950s, the period of the controversy with Yang, Ai has recanted his previous position. He now says that he had underestimated the capitalist threat.

With regard to the question of the superstructure, there existed in the past an erroneous and confused view, which said that the progressive side of the bourgeois ideology should be regarded as part of the guiding thought of the superstructure of the state; and that it was an indispensable though not a decisive part, under the guidance of Marxist-Leninist thought. Such an erroneous idea has been refuted after discussion. I now agree with the view that Marxist-Leninist thought is the sole guiding thought of our state regime, that our political system should conform to the Marxist-Leninist thought and viewpoint, and not conform to the bourgeois viewpoint.³⁹

From this time on, Ai will see the state's relation with all non-socialist elements primarily in terms of struggle. Never again will he be accused of tolerating capitalism or any other sector conceptually opposed to socialism.

The question as to whether this represents an intellectual sacrifice to get along politically, or whether it was the result of an honest self-appraisal in the light

of criticism and self-criticism is not easily answered. His philosophical work in the 1930s, his original and forceful arguments concerning the political and epistemological problems connected with ideological consolidation, and his understanding of the meaning and function of the dialectic, suggest that during the period of "New Democracy," his judgment of capitalism was too affirmative. Put another way, his desire (and duty) to education, explain and justify official policy, caused a preoccupation with what was, instead of what could be. This changes after the declaration of the General Line, and the publication of "On Contradiction."

The adoption of a new stage transformed his sense of time. The present was now teleologically defined; immediacy became an aspect of a dialectically unfolding immanency. Philosophically, this meant that constructs had to incorporate the complexity of their moment within a stance that concomitantly divided them along the suppositions of a socialist path. This Mao provides, and Ai finds, in the principle of the "unity of opposites." This axiom allows Ai to group the disparate elements which characterize the economy into two conflicting groups. It affirms his stance of exclusivity. "The economic base in the transition period," he writes,

is not monistic, but is a 'unity of opposites'--two antagonistic bases. Nor is the superstructure monistic. It is also a 'unity of opposites'--the socialist superstructure which occupies the ruling position, and the factors of the capitalist superstructure which are hostile to it.⁴⁰

This dichotomy, in turn, presupposed new types of agricultural and industrial signposts; contemporary non-socialist productive relations simply could not be tolerated. And here, to back his sense of the imperative, Ai again looks to Stalin. For it was Stalin, Ai says, who saw that the achievement of socialism requires the simultaneous alteration of individual and handicraft modes of production. Stalin's idea was that of "a course of reform of the individual peasant economy which was also a course for the building of the socialist economic base."⁴¹

Compared to the view of Yang, this pushes Soviet history forward, and it suggests that Stalin did not laud the individual peasant in either policy or declaration. And it is in Stalin, particularly the Stalin who ends the NEP, that Ai finds his Virgil. For Ai understands China's contemporary moment as analogous to that of the Soviet Union in the late twenties; when, as he sees it, both established state structures were under threat.⁴² Consequently, Stalin's words retain a significance higher than mere sentiment.

It must be recalled that in China at this time there were a number of ongoing campaigns to eradicate 'counter-revolutionaries' and 'class collaborationists'. The Sufan movement to purge anti-Party elements, the excoriation of Hu Feng and the idea of 'bourgeois humanism', and the start up of the criticism of Liang Shuming and the philosophy of pragmatism, made it clear that this was a period of serious class-struggle. Indeed, by 1954, when Ai quotes Stalin on the peasantry, the Gao Gang affair had only recently been resolved. And as Mao noted, "the emergence of the anti-Party alliance of Gao Gang and Rao Shushi was by no means accidental, but was the acute manifestation of the intense class struggle at the present stage."⁴³ In this, Ai was quite in line in offering a bleak assessment of China's polity.

And here, the regulatory prescription as to how to overcome class conflict seemed to him pre-established in the given of collectivization, and a concentration upon heavy industry. This he sees as Stalin's solution, or the way in which Stalin "defended and developed Lenin's thoughts on socialist industrialization."⁴⁴ This policy continues to be appropriate, Ai argues, because in China heavy industry is the "pivot capable of driving all of socialist industrialization forward."⁴⁵ Collectivization, in turn, is the foundation of socialist industrialization. "If," Ai says, "a socialist basis is not constructed in the villages, then socialist industrialization cannot be firm."⁴⁶ Though, as he notes, collectivization was originally Stalin's specific response to the grain crisis, it still has a more general application. "Stalin pointed out that in developing the construction of socialist

industry, it's necessary to guide the individual peasant in an orderly fashion towards the road of collectivization; to construct a socialist basis in the villages."⁴⁷

Unless "orderly" is to be decoded as coercion, this is utterly disingenuous. It also does not accord with Ai's earlier statements, in his radio lectures, where he discussed the more forceful aspects of the Soviet transition.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the issue here is not that of deceit; instead, it is to note that aside from what are deemed general laws of entry into socialism--collectivization and industrialization--Ai offers little in the way of political or economic strategy. His discussion of the base and superstructure rests more upon the idea of the base and its future than upon any detailed discussion as to its character. Ultimately, the analysis of the political economy is expressed in relatively traditional fashion, through philosophical constructs. And as such, Ai's concern centers upon the critical function of consciousness in shaping the material base.

The pivotal role of consciousness in either aiding or hindering the development of the economy was of course a hallmark of Ai's conceptual understanding. He had always held a dynamic view of the subject-object relation, where understanding integrated the discovered antinomies--the ever-present contradictions--into its reflective activity. Thought was active, not reactive; and thus could not be compared to a mirror or a photograph. As he said,

to discover the contradiction which exists within a thing, just is to discover the problem, just is to indicate the problem. Only, tediously, to want 'to respect reality', 'respect proof', is certainly not inclusive of the scientific method. Because reality and proof (without necessarily going through the distortion of pragmatism) just serves as the starting point for the scientific method. The critical key for the scientific method is towards reality--and it's necessary to treat this as objectively existing practical matter--to increase analytical research, to discover within the objective laws [emphasis added].⁴⁹

The point was not, as Yang would have it, to accept or to legitimize a given circumstance; it was to specify, and sublimate a revealed contradiction.

It is clear how this kind of approach, one which ties method to the epistemologic a priori's of a system of antinomies, may lead to a picture of the superstructure as mired in conflict. Left alone, an understanding which is unified by contradiction will not in itself necessarily seek to reaffirm or resolve its reality. But, of course, philosophic argument was not a singular concern; or it was so only with respect to dissidence. Ultimately, philosophy was the predicate of state determination; consciousness the refinement of images where neither logic nor historical evidence was always readily apparent.

Thus, in July 1955, for example, Mao found the social situation in China had been suddenly transformed; and that the time was right for a 'high tide of socialization'. "Nineteen fifty-five," he declared, was

a decisive year for the struggle between socialism and capitalism in China . . . in the first half of 1955 the atmosphere was dark and dark clouds threatened. But in the second half of the year there has been a complete change and the climate is entirely different.⁵⁰

By the end of the year the victory of socialism will be largely assured.⁵¹

The point here is not whether Mao really believed that circumstances had been so transformed that the time was ripe for a leap forward; or whether he was trying to force a transformation which had few social roots; where his rhetoric was simply another device to mobilize the peasantry. What is important is that once announced his statement became dictum. And this meant that Ai and his bleak logic of division were pushed aside in favor of Yang, and his more elementary, but comforting, notion of secure control. Yang, that is, told the leadership what they wanted to hear. And thus in 1955 he became Director of the Marxist-Leninist Institute.

In terms of theory, the contrasting arguments of Ai and Yang made manifest the possibilities open to expression. In this, the allowance for a consideration of the character of the polity was to be found in the essential idea of uniqueness. An idea

which in turn gave meaning to knowledge. This is made clear in the novel approach toward Soviet history. For in their effort to adapt certain aspects of the Soviet experience to China's situation, Ai and Yang assumed the new categorical ground of China's specificity. With the vantage point of "On Contradiction," with, that is, the established grid of particularity, they (as well as all Party theorists) were now able to select those aspects from previous socialist experience which could either aid or inform current analysis. The Soviet past did not provide a paradigm to be imitated, rather it offered data for interpretive choice. The statements of Lenin and Stalin were less invariant rules for conduct than they were citations: references for policy recommendations. Indeed, the principle of difference was so rooted in China's political discourse, that Ai had to reassure his audience that this did not imply the abandonment of socialism. "Our present line for the transition period," he wrote (before the 'high tide'),

has its own particularity, and is distinct from the general line for the transition period in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless both are [or were] for the transition to socialism. Therefore it may not be said that because China's general line for the transition is possessed of its particularity, and is dissimilar to that of the Soviet Union, it is not a general line for the transition towards socialist society.⁵²

At the categorical level of political philosophy there was no Soviet model. Whatever this might have implied in the past with respect to the idea of mimesis, had been gainsaid by Maoist practice. The stance of particularism had created its own equivalent truths within the world view of Marxism-Leninism. This was the new charter for ideas.

At the conceptual level, in the arena of explanation, analysis, and suggestion, where controversies attempted to endorse or to anticipate the 'correct line' Soviet experience had a definite place. It offered evidence for dictums, and proof for contentions. This is why Soviet history could be broken up so easily into a series of periods, each almost a clear and discontinuous moment, for their value was determined by China's theorists. Ai and Yang could each have their Lenin and

their Stalin. In this, the metaphor of a 'high tide' was not inappropriate, it did denote a swell in the substantive content of China's political theory.

Political philosophy was more than simply the after effect of image; it defined (or attempted to define) promise, by making clear that which was both stated and implied. In this, philosophy assumed prerogative, as it led its collegiate disciplines, and, of course, the arts, through the constructs and political meaning of discourse. It was the privilege of political theory to regulate, formally, at least, conceptual performance upon the grid.

For this to become evident, however, it is necessary here to move to a discussion of the analysis of some of China's leading political economists concerning the character of the polity. It is only then that the ground for the constructs of theory becomes truly clear.

2

The dispute between Ai and Yang centered primarily on concepts; on conflicting ideas as to the nature of the base and the superstructure. In this, there was little in terms of concrete analysis of the economy. Theories were instead supported by rival citations from the Soviet past.

This was to be expected given the conditional aspect to philosophic discourse. The fact that the line between the real and the possible was blurred means that argument was, out of necessity, thrown back into a sort of 'meta-air'. The apodictic of future orientation, of a present understood as being in permanent transition, locked thought into a fixed space of anticipation. Thus philosophic consciousness was fundamentally reflexive, concerned with how each moment fitted into a set of categorical presumptions.

While some political theorists were issuing judgments, there was also a group of political economists who were offering critical interpretations of the base. Their concern was less with the superstructure than it was with the complexity of

economic definition. But in order to develop their points these economists had to adopt the basic discursive formation of political theory. Method presupposed the ideological framework which political theory had helped to set out. Hence the analysis of political economy entered the matrix of inviolate categories, sanctified leadership pronouncements, and restricted conceptual movement.

To make this clear, and to give an indication as to how the base was understood--the other side of the problem--it is important to note, however briefly, the arguments of some of the leading economic theorists, who were on the editorial board of the journal New Construction.

There were two structural keys to the analysis of these political economists: "On Contradiction" and the designation of the economy as state capitalist.

"On Contradiction" provided the ground for the development of theory. Its underlying idea, the distillation of the general into the particular, was the presupposition of reason; the platform for conceptual argument. In turn, the characterization of the economy as state capitalist allowed political economists to read into a somewhat ambiguous phrase a more substantive definition of independence. "The fundamental nature of our country's political power and that of the Soviet Union is identical," Shen Zhiyuan, one of the three editors of New Construction, writes. "However," he continues, "our country's historical conditions, and those of the Soviet Union are not the same. Thus the form and function of state capitalism in our transitional period and that which occurred in the Soviet Union are also different."⁵³

Here, the working out of the principle that one divides into two, the unity of opposites, is apparent. The use or celebration of state capitalism is perhaps not.

State capitalism was one of those terms that had a relatively brief run and then disappeared; much as it had in the Soviet Union. As policy it could be traced both to the Common Program and to the Draft Constitution, where it signified the process of transforming capitalism into socialism. It actually expressed the form of

capitalism in China. "The present day capitalist economy in China," Mao wrote, ". . . is not an ordinary but a particular kind of capitalist economy, namely a state capitalist economy."⁵⁴ But though Mao talked of the "various" forms of state capitalism, and though others discussed the complexity of its stages, it was unclear as to what this truly meant. There was no concrete definition of this idea as a specific course. It seemed more a nationalist expression than anything else. Still, cloudy as it was, state capitalism was a politically legitimate notion, open to interpretation. And as the New Constructionists were intent upon limiting the pace of economic reform, they read into this phrase a statement of complexity; a recognition of a lengthy process.

Almost inevitably, this was brought out through contrast, through the particularization of the universal. State capitalism became raised, that is, to a sort of abstract noun, an historic stage which all transitions were required to pass through; in their specifically determined manner. The overriding subject became the predicate of a patavinous realization.

In this, uniqueness was underlined through role. Shen, for example, argued that whereas state capitalism was an external economic relation in the Soviet Union, in China the relationship was internal; the state participated directly in the management of private enterprises.

The principal form of state capitalism which the Soviet Union adopted at that time [1921] was to follow a system of leasing and hiring. But today the principal form which our country adopts is one of public and private partnership; we still do not lease or rent.⁵⁵

At the same time, Qian Jiazhu stressed that while state capitalism in the Soviet Union acted as the mediation between small production and socialism, in China, it served as the link between capitalism and socialism.

Can we compare our economy today [1954] with that of the Soviet Union in 1921? Without a doubt we consider we cannot. Although we are also a country where small production is supreme, we already have today a strong state economy, and a rapidly developing

co-operative economy. And from our state industrial enterprises and the co-operative enterprises we have already established a link with the agricultural economy. Therefore our state capitalism is a transition from capitalist industry towards socialism, and is not a transition from small production (agriculture and handicraft industry) towards socialism.⁵⁶

In turn, particularity affirmed complexity. Understanding that China's economy was basically primitive--"at present," Qian writes, "our economy is relatively backward"⁵⁷--both Qian and Shen read out of the concept of state capitalism a somewhat epochal process, consisting of three lengthy stages. With respect to industry and capital accumulation, China was to move gradually from a situation where private capitalists were beginning to depend upon the state to that of an external alliance between state and private capital until, as a result of transformed productive relations, the state participated directly and controlled all industry.⁵⁸ Concomitant with the development of the productive forces there would be an evolution in the thinking guiding production; consciousness as well as technique would be raised.

It should be pointed out that in going through the practice of state capitalism to transform private industry, this involves the transformation of private industry and the transformation of the private industrialist. These two aspects are unified and cannot be separated. The transformation of industry means going through each kind of state capitalism to make industry prosper, so that it is able to suit the needs of the national economy. To make, that is, industrial productive relations correspond to the developing requirements of the productive forces. The transformation of the individual occurs by going through state capitalism, under the direct leadership of the socialist economic sector, to teach and transform the private industrialists, to make them become patriotic industrialists.⁵⁹

This sanguine approach to ideological reformation owed everything to the ambiguous position of national capital in China. A violent struggle against a counter-revolutionary class was not, Qian suggests, necessary because these capitalists did not dream of restoration. Nurtured under the yoke of semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism, this specifically Chinese class was both weak and yet

somehow progressive, given its apparent willingness to aid construction. This is why they could be peacefully transformed.⁶⁰

And for Qian and Shen this reinforced the distinctions within the generality of the socialist experience. The point here is that China might avoid that kind of forced liquidation of capital which had occurred in the Soviet Union. "The historical responsibility for the progressive transformation of state capitalist industry," Qian writes, "is the special responsibility of our socialist revolution. It did not previously exist in the Soviet Union, and it does not exist in today's Eastern European Democracies."⁶¹

In this, the key is of course the idea of difference; the expression of the universal as dichotomy. Qian was not trying to celebrate the achievements of China's economy in comparison to that of the Soviet Union at a similar stage of development; he was, instead, emphasizing the inviolacy of circumstance. What has happened in the Soviet past has for him little relevance to China's present. And thus, in what is also a quiet swipe at Ai and Yang, Qian notes that it

severs the historical conditions to quote a section from Lenin's "On the Grain Tax" to try to explain the function of state capitalism in our transition period. Without question his analysis of the why and wherefore of small production is completely unsuited for our contemporary practice.⁶²

This emphasis upon particularism seemingly implied a complete freedom to Marxist interpretation. The idea of the distillation of general principles appeared to be a cover for creation; a formal expression of link which screened a substantive independent art. "Within our life, within our practical struggle, according to this time, here and now, in these concrete situations and conditions," Shen writes,

we all adapt all workable methods. This is a matter for China's people themselves. The responsibility of creative Marxism is to utilize the ideological method of Marxism, based on the spirit and essence of Marxism, and unite it with China's concrete situation.⁶³

But in a situation where meaning was dependent upon a specific realization, subjectivity might lack restraint. And voluntarism, unchecked, threatened order. This of course is what Stalin understood, and it explains his sharp denial of the principle that men may create their own laws. "Some comrades," he says,

deny the objective character of laws of science, and the laws of political economy particularly, under socialism. They deny that the laws of political economy reflect law-governed processes which operate independently of the will of man. They believe that in view of the specific role assigned to the Soviet state by history, the Soviet state can abolish existing laws of political economy and can "form," "create," new laws. These comrades are profoundly mistaken. . . . Marxism regards laws of science--whether they be laws of natural science or laws of political economy--as reflections of objective processes which take place independently of the will of man.⁶⁴

Indeed the whole conservative trend of his later writings,⁶⁵ contemporaneous to this period in China's history, appears to represent and attempt to reassert, and hence, reaffirm the predominance of law over will. This was of course the ideological correlative to Party rule.

The point is that neither in China nor in the Soviet Union could the activity of synthesis be permitted to exhaust the concept of universality; something or some things had to remain outside. What stood apart, elevated, though still providing direction, were the laws; the categories of the dialectic and the principles of process.

These clearly were not laws at all. They were simply assertions, expressions of state purpose masquerading as norms. Yet, once in play these categories did have meaning as rules of the discursive game. They provided a critical reference point for historical identity, by helping to establish the formal criteria for the transition to socialism. In turn, they structured conceptual thought by informing perspective. This of course opened up the possibilities for practical theories which could integrate the apodictics of philosophy within subjective intent. The activity of synthesis thus allowed adaptation interpretative scope: laws could be both maintained and creatively shaped.

Shen, for example, used Stalin's 'law of correspondence' (which was little more than a shell) to argue that China's economy needed to be completely overhauled in a gradual and particular fashion. What Shen basically contends is that the requirements of this law justify both a primary emphasis upon the development of the productive forces, and a prior supersession of the productive relations in order to make this all possible. In other words Shen uses this law to legitimate whatever he wants, no matter how illogical it might appear. But at the same time, he has to invoke the law.

Thus, he begins his analysis with the declaration that,

the general line for our transition period is based on the objective laws of social and economic development . . . the objective law and affirmation that the relations of production must be in conformity with the character of the productive forces.⁶⁶

This, he says, means that, "to realize the thorough transformation of the economic form, or to realize completely the transformation of the productive relations of each economic sector, it is necessary to strive to transform the technical conditions."⁶⁷

At the same time, he also states that,

within our present small agricultural economy there is little possibility of being able to improve the situation of technique. The key determinant to such an improvement in agricultural technique lies in transforming the productive relations of the small agricultural economy; transforming the small agricultural system.⁶⁸

And reason is thereby reduced to a parallogism.

Moreover, Shen is also able to find in all this an injunction against subjectivism: 'correspondence' signifies restraint. "In the end, he says,

the line demands that under the prerequisite of the possible and the necessary, there be a process of going through each kind of state capitalism to realize gradually the socialist transformation of capitalist industry and commercial enterprises. This does not require, for example, the use of a paper law to nationalize immediately.⁶⁹

Shen's circular argument expressed the difficulty of attempting to adapt the tenets of classical Marxism to what was, in these terms, an unanticipated situation. Whatever the spin of Stalin's law, it could not replace the axioms of nineteenth century Marxism. And thus the idea of the primacy of the productive forces within the developmental process still supposed some sort of dithyrambic assent. Yet, in non-capitalist formations, specifically China in the early 1950s, this could not suffice as a meaningful principle, since adherence invalidated the very idea of a transition to socialism through pre-existing socialist relations. And so statements of substantive intent, declarations of need, and recommendations as to course, could seemingly do no more than try to manoeuvre around, but always through a field of a priori's.

2.1

Not everyone thought in terms of immanent teleology. There were those who sought to define their moment in terms of its immediacy. In this, the grid of particularism was both recognized and accepted. And thus the assumption underlying response presupposed more novel constructs, for discourse had to be appropriate to its new reality. Rubrics which either simplified or subsumed all phenomena under the struggle between capitalism and socialism--or resorted to convenient expressions--the general prescriptions of Lenin and Stalin, or pejorative characterizations such as "leftism" or "rightism"--were in this regard inadequate, since they undercut the very principle of uniqueness. The idea instead would be to try to move theory vertically; to relocate its discourse in new laws and contradictions. Reason would attempt to discover, within the overall commitment to the categorical structure of Marxism, that which could make manifest the specific nature of China's road.

This said, there were very few theorists who could be identified with this approach. It was difficult to separate oneself from allegiance to the line, or to the

vocabulary that safely reinforced it, and remain a Marxist. It was, in the end, a rather singular experience. Ironically, or perhaps logically, it was the translator of Capital, Wang Xuewen,⁷⁰ who recognized most clearly the discontinuous aspects of China's moment. And thus it was he who attempted to break through the 'shibboleths' of theory to re-ground these constructs in their reality.

The economy, Wang says, comprises five, very loosely connected sectors. In fact, they are basically self-sufficient entities, each governed by their own distinctive laws. "The co-operative economy . . . has its own principal laws, the private capitalist economy has its own principal laws, [and] the state run economy has its own principal laws."⁷¹ This clearly distances Wang from those who held to a sum-total theory of the economy, and indeed he chastises thinkers such as Yang, who "see a link between each kind of sector in the transition period, but who do not recognize the particularity and the certain kind of independence of each kind of economy."⁷²

The question though was not one of emphasis, of stressing the parts rather than the whole. On the contrary, Wang was arguing that the nature of these sectors, their various strengths, prevented a workable concept of unity. In turn, this meant that there could not be a fundamental economic law which could characterize this period. This was not an epoch or an era, such as feudalism, capitalism, or socialism. This was instead a moment distinguished by complexity, with a concomitant series of principal laws. And thus the state run economy could not define the method or function of distribution or exchange in these other economies. "There are those comrades," Wang writes, "who do not recognize that the co-operative economy and the individual economy have their own economic laws."⁷³

Because each economy has its own different conditions, the guiding function of the state run economy receives, in one respect, the limitations of its strengths and conditions; at the same time, it also receives the limitations of other economic conditions. Although the state run economy has as its basis the guiding economic laws of

socialism, it certainly is not as it is in socialism, where it constitutes the fundamental law determining the whole social economy.⁷⁴

Wang's point was to try to redirect analysis towards what was truly specific about this economy. This is why the denial of a fundamental law was so critical, because it gainsaid the reincorporation of diversity within the nomenclature of capitalism and socialism. And, of course, it disavowed the reliance upon past quotation. To Wang, theorists who looked back to find in the Soviet past a present meaning, failed to grasp the reality of uniqueness.

They do not understand that Lenin's analysis arose from concrete economic conditions. They do not understand that it indicated the transition to socialism. Our situation in the transition period is very complicated, and cannot be seen simply as a transition from capitalism to socialism; from these two kinds of particular constructs, each with its own tendency. It certainly does not summarize the particularism of the five kinds of economic forms of our present.⁷⁵

This redirection of gaze inward had its categorical grounding in "On Contradiction." Though Wang substitutes the concept of law for that of contradiction, both the formal structure of thought (the descending hierarchy of classification--from fundamental to principal to principal aspect) and the overall intention (to celebrate the particular) clearly follow from Mao's seminal work. Wang's attempt to explain the meaning of China's unique road, by seeing it in and for itself, required, that is, a previous philosophical breakthrough.

But in the effort to realize the central assumption of a theoretical discourse a dynamic occurs which may lead to unanticipated and politically undesirable results. And this in fact occurred here. For Wang argued further, was led to insist, that the entire character of the individual economy had been misconceived. It was not, he said, simply a small producing economy; it also comprised a large self-sustaining sector. The same terms were being incorrectly applied to what were in fact two distinct groups: one which produced for the market, and one which tried purely to survive. "Within our small peasant economy there are two sectors whose character

are different and cannot be mixed . . . it cannot be said that the commodity producing sector has killed the naturally producing sector."⁷⁶ Indeed, in many respects it was the latter which was truly the individual peasant economy, which gave meaning to the term. And it was this naturally producing sector that characterized China's uniqueness.

There are those comrades who do not consider that the individual economy has its own economic laws. They think that the individual economy is determined by the influence of each kind of society's fundamental law. I do not go along with this method, because the individual economy has gone through three developmental stages: slavery, feudalism, and capitalism, even though the influence of the ruling economy kept dying. After capitalism dies, and capitalist economies lose their effect, the individual economy will still exist; and it certainly is not going to lose its capitalist tendencies.⁷⁷

For Wang, the refusal to separate the subsistence and marketing sectors meant that in the purchase of grain, the state would unknowingly extract that which many peasants needed to exist. "If one mistakenly believes that the small peasant economy is equivalent to small commodity producers," Wang writes, "it will lead to the effect that there will be a purchase of residuary food stuffs and a compulsory purchase of the daily intake of the peasant will be inevitable."⁷⁸

This was written in 1954; a year later, as is now known, there was a grain supply crisis effected by the system of unified purchase. After some time, the Party did admit that there were cases where peasants never received enough food. But this, of course, was blamed on a variety of factors--cadre insufficiency, bureaucratism, and hoarding by rich and middle peasants.⁷⁹ Here, it may be suggested that the problem was also caused by the lack of a clear and detailed understanding of the nature of the countryside. Ultimately, it was far easier, and certainly more politically acceptable to see the small producing economy as coherent, whole and therefore manageable; to see it for some time, as an element within the capitalist economy to be utilized and vanquished, than to understand it as a primitive economic form, subject to its own laws.

In turn, Wang's argument redefined the concept of transition. For the process now involved the transformation of a small producing sector, and a subsistence level economy. "Our country," Wang writes,

is not simply in a transition from capitalism towards socialism, but is still in transition from an individual economy towards socialism. The individual economy, within our state economy, occupies the moving force, and it is not simply a commodity producing sector. There are still many kinds of self-sufficient sectors.⁸⁰

This appeared to put the idea of a transition somewhat on hold. The problem of capitalism and socialism, of transcendence, was clearly less meaningful, almost without purpose, in the context of an economy dominated by a backward agricultural sector. Indeed, according to Wang, this was not really a complete economy, but instead was a composite series of economies; each characterized by their own principal laws.

The inherited language of discourse thus seemed inadequate. The particularism of underdevelopment suggested a demand for new analytical constructs. Yet, uniqueness was only categorically intelligible in terms of its other, the universality of Marxism. A synthesis was needed therefore which recognized and tied China's economic reality to the political suppositions of transition. This Wang found in the co-operative movement. Following the lead of his colleagues on the editorial board of New Construction, Wang disguised the low level of China's development by celebrating the distinct achievement of co-operativization. His description of this movement as semi-socialist (which it was, only in respect to primitive communism) allowed a subsistence level economy to be seen positively, as part of a specific but generally planned future. In all this, time was understood as that which was historically relative but within a Marxist continuum. And thus, Wang underscored the uniqueness of China's co-operative movement through contrast.

The transitional period in the Soviet Union had a primitive form of small commodity agricultural economy. In our country this is the individual economy (it contains the natural economic sector and the small commodity sector). In the beginning of the Soviet Union's transition period, the cooperative economy was a state capitalist economy, afterwards it was a socialist economy. Our co-operative economy certainly is not a capitalist co-operative economy, and it is not a state capitalist economy, but is a semi-socialist and socialist co-operative economy.⁸¹

In passing, it should be noted that Wang was not always consistent in his understanding of the socialist character of these economies. Though he was firm in drawing a distinction between the processes of transition in China and in the Soviet Union, there were times when he saw the co-operative economy as possessing some socialist elements. Thus, in 1953, he wrote,

our present agricultural producing is neither a capitalist, state capitalist, nor socialist co-operative economy. But in the transition from the individual economy to socialism, this co-operative society has a semi-socialist essence. It cannot be seen as the same as the co-operative society in the Soviet Union.⁸²

Wang's pressing concern was not, of course, with the extent of socialism within the co-operative movement. His point, rather, was that a new moment supposes new ideas. And that, in turn, gives rise to, becomes the expression of more contemporary norms. Thus he writes,

Marxist-Leninist political economy is without a study of semi-socialist co-operative economies. It is, of course, without a study of the laws of semi-socialist co-operative economies. China's revolutionary practice created the semi-socialist co-operative economy. This kind of co-operative society possesses its own economic conditions; naturally it produces its own economic laws.⁸³

To take the discontinuity of discourse within the spectrum of Marxism-Leninism seriously, to attempt to realize the consequences of particularism within original concepts, threatened the discursive order. It stated that the intellectual moorings of the grid needed to be rethought. But to the degree that this could ever occur, this most certainly was an élite judgment. Moreover, the specific emphasis

here upon the complex status of the individual economy clearly undermined state intention. It demanded a re-evaluation of the reality of transition.

This did not pass without comment. And in, "Several Problems Concerning the Essence and Laws of Our Country's Transitional Economy," Du Ruzhi and Yu Shudong responded to Wang, by arguing that he had got it all wrong: that he had misunderstood the nature of the economy. And it is important to summarize their point, briefly, though their thesis is long and well considered, because as a statement of orthodoxy, it underlined the epistemological closure which characterized this theoretical discourse.

They begin with the assertion that there is only one governing law. Laws, they say, exist within an hierarchy, unified and defined by that which controls. One rules, the rest are ruled; "and the ruling economy influences the other economies in such a way that they lose their independent developing character."⁸⁴ In the transition period, this process of transformation may generally be seen as that which sharpens the antagonism between capitalism and socialism. In fact the meaning of the transition is made manifest in the imposition of state will upon the private sectors.

Thus, as long as it was accepted that the socialist economy--or socialist types of economies--determined the complexion of unity, then clearly the contradiction with capitalism was the key to this period. Conversely, Wang's approach, his emphasis upon discrete laws and sectors, understated this antinomy in favor of concomitant tensions. And it was this that Du and Yu found intolerable. "If it is taken that in the transition period, each economic sector has 'its own principal laws', then by considering all these laws as equal, the struggle between fully developing socialism and dying capitalism is destroyed."⁸⁵ Wang simply does not understand that, "our transition period's particular contradiction is that between socialism and capitalism."⁸⁶

This redirecting of the territory of transition with more conventional signposts also brings Lenin and Stalin back to ground. Their insights into the fissures endemic to the transitional process once again take on a transcendent value. And, according to Du and Yu, Wang's denial of this gainsays in effect almost the entire Leninist inheritance. He, "exaggerates the distinction between China and the Soviet Union, and thereby destroys the universal significance of Lenin's proclamations concerning the transition period."⁸⁷ They point out that though China's particular form of underdevelopment required the era of "New Democracy," in terms of a macro-view, especially with regard to commodity production in the countryside, China's situation is comparable to that of the Soviet Union in the late twenties.

The difference between the commodity production of our small agricultural economy and that of the Soviet Union at that time [1928] is not that great. Thus, from the aspect of the individual economy the difference between the Soviet Union and ourselves is one of degrees. It is not a qualitative difference.⁸⁸

Here, their argument was that the individual economy had to be seen as part of commodity production in general. It was not, as Wang insisted, a separate economic sector. And though aspects of the natural self-subsisting economy did exist--as 'unsurmounted remains'--they were too small to matter. Before, they say, peasants treated produce as the ground rent payable to the landlord; now this same produce becomes a commodity to be sold. Theoretically, the mistake is to see this category in absolute terms; that is, "it is not necessary to have 100 percent commodity production to call an economy a small commodity economy."⁸⁹

This in turn creates a dangerous situation. For though this kind of economy was critical for overall development, left unchecked, a commodity economy engenders capitalism. This article of Marxist faith, indeed reinforced the all-embracing nature of the conflict with capitalism. And this was for Du and Yu the

distinguishing aspect of the whole transformation process; the integral reason underlying course.

We must guide the individual peasant economy towards socialism, and not allow its spontaneous development towards the road of capitalism. And it is because the individual economy is a small producing economy, that in the transition period we utilize the circulation of commodities to promote trade between the state and co-operative societies, to promote the circulation between town and country, and to strengthen the alliance between workers and farmers.⁹⁰

Wang's attempt to recast theoretical discourse so that it might be more appropriate to its political reality, opened up the possibility for a different commitment to the truth of socialism. As such, it represented both an achievement and a threat. In realizing the essential tenet of "On Contradiction," in grounding the principle of particularity, Wang asked for a postponement of all substantive discussion regarding the transition as a somewhat immediate and recognizable goal. For, in effect, the categories and concepts attendant upon this process cancelled the complexity of uniqueness. And yet, what Wang sought to preserve, denied the very certainty, which not only was an assumed right of state, but which, practically, had already been summarized and classified in the Constitution. The scope of interpretation for economic and political phenomena had, that is, been officially bound. And thus, aside from self-belief, and perhaps the writings of Marx, Wang had no support in his efforts toward the definition of an alternative stance. In turn, there was apparently no further point to dialogue; he seems to have stopped writing in 1955.

3

There was another theoretical controversy during this period that it is important to mention. This involved the seemingly abstract question as to whether

or not antagonistic contradictions presupposed a violent resolution. Though formal, the issue was of real concern. Having gone through the bloodshed associated with the seizure of power, and understanding that the relationship between capital and labor was one of continuous struggle, it made sense to ask whether the dialectical logic underlying the transition process dictated violence.

The issue was raised by Shu Weikuang in "A Discussion Concerning the Gradual Leap in China's Transition Period," where he argued that the antagonistic contradiction between capitalism and socialism could be in fact peacefully resolved. The key, he said, was to recognize that in an antinomy it was essence, and not form, which determined the substance of resolution. There were, in other words, no imperatives within classification.

Although it is unquestioned that an explosive form necessarily resolves an antagonistic contradiction, it is not, however, [always] necessary to use force to resolve an antagonistic contradiction. Towards an enemy in a divided class society, where the counter-revolutionary class occupies the ruling position, force is required. Where the revolutionary working class, however, occupies the ruling position, though the exploiting class still has not been liquidated, an explosive form is not definitely needed. It is correct to say that the character of a contradiction determines the method of resolution, the form of leap. One cannot, however, say abstractly in turn, that in resolving a contradiction, the form of the leap determines the character of the contradiction.⁹¹

This is quite logical, and it is also a clear example of the way in which the general principle of "On Contradiction," the distillation of the general into the particular, had become, by 1955, truly integrated within the structure of analytical discourse. Here, the concept of the general was not Marxism but contradiction in itself. And thus, antinomy, which of course was the ontic principle of this particular Marxist transition, supposed a more specified classification. This is why investigation had to move from the fundamental to the particular, and then to the particular aspect of contradiction. Location was everything. Therefore, Shu explains that while the basic contradiction is between capital and labor, the principal aspect of this contradiction is decided by who is in power; who governs.

The leading position of the proletariat, the guiding function of the socialist sector of the economy, all indicate that within the contradiction between the working and capitalist classes, the principal aspect of the contradiction is governed by the progressive, revolutionary working class. This point is of particular importance in grasping the meaning of the capitalist transformation in our transition period. Without this situation, the fundamental question of socialist transformation could not exist.⁹²

Though this was necessary for creating the possibility of a peaceful resolution, it was not entirely sufficient. Shu points out that in the Soviet Union and in the People's Democracies in Eastern Europe, the principal aspect of contradiction was also revealed in working class rule. But there, as opposed to China, the method of resolution required force.

Within the Soviet Union and the Eastern European Democratic Dictatorships, the liquidation of the capitalist class was achieved through violence. But under our concrete conditions, it's possible to undergo a peaceful road of socialist transformation in order to achieve the same goal: the liquidation of the capitalist class.⁹³

According to Shu, there are three reasons why China's situation is historically unique. The first is that Party control is absolute. Second, within the struggle between capital and labor there is also an identity of interest; national capital willingly supports the task of socialist construction. Third, the international situation is peaceful enough to insure that China is not under threat.

The leading and defining role of our working class in each aspect of political and economic life; the identity between capital and the working class which exists within the unified line of struggle [the identity of identity and difference] . . . makes it clear that capital follows the leadership of the working class; and the increasingly beneficial international situation, are the three conditions which determine why it is possible to resolve the antagonistic contradiction between capital and labor peacefully.⁹⁴

These of course are not philosophical conditions; they simply reflect a subjective attitude or a personal hope. He offers an idea as to what should happen based upon an ossification of the present, thus turning the future into now. This

freezes the concept of the dialectic so that its principal aspect--working class rule--remains fixed and unchallenged. To support this Shu creates an identity between the universal and the particular by raising the latter to the former, allowing him to see in this moment a guarantee for the times ahead. And this is disguised by a philosophic vocabulary that does little more than veil this reality in notions of the inexorable.

This theoretical elision of the general with the specific was noted by Zhao Lexing, whose commentary was perhaps the most interesting among those who responded to Shu. Zhao's argument, summarized by the editors of Philosophical Research, was basically that Shu's point was rather incoherent, as it was logically inconsistent.⁹⁵

Zhao begins by noting where Shu and he agree, and this concerns the relationship between a contradiction and its essence. Zhao also accepts the maxim that it is the internal aspect which determines the character of an antinomic resolution. But, Zhao says, to accept this immediately detaches Shu's second and third propositions from their reasoning. For, the idea of a peaceful road based upon an identity of interests is as truth, historically specific; it is part of the internal aspect of China's particular contradiction. It is not necessarily the case for all states in transition to socialism. Instances of one moment are not equivalent to invariant laws.⁹⁶

In addition, according to Zhao, though Shu stresses the firmness of Party control, his statements regarding the secondary portion of this particular contradiction are unclear and philosophically indeterminate. There are times, for example, when Shu suggests that the conservative, or reactionary element might cohere to threaten the state or obstruct progress. But if this is the case, Zhao says, then Shu has reintroduced, either intentionally or not, the very spectre of violence which he had apparently philosophically tried to overcome. Shu's point, that is, would imply that in the development from old to new, in the unfolding of the

dialectic, qualitative transcendence would constantly require a physical act of suppression. And therefore, while ideological campaigns might not of necessity be total in a revolutionary sense, that is nation-wide, or fundamentally about state power, they could be partial, that is, periodic crises within the whole gradual leap to socialism. In this, violence would be integral to, part of the very core of the dialectic of transition.⁹⁷ This, Zhao says, Shu in fact recognizes, but avoids; preferring instead to try to straddle the fissures in his logic. Both Shu and Zhao take seriously the idea of the dialectic, its invariant attributes made manifest within subjectively determined events. The difference for Zhao, is that Shu stops short when philosophical speculation conflicts with his desire and belief.

Shu in fact did respond to Zhao, though in an extremely oblique manner. Rather than continue with the question as to whether or not the resolution of periodic antagonistic contradictions logically supposed some form of violence, Shu concerns himself with the unstated prologue to all this: are explosions that occur during a leap formally equivalent to the overthrow of state power? Are all eruptions by definition counter-revolutions? And, he contends, this is what Zhao argues. Thus, in response, to what is intellectually a straw-man, Shu says that as everything depends upon the character of the contradiction, the nature of a leap cannot be determined in advance. This is of course how the entire discussion started. In any event having avoided the primary question as to the force of the secondary aspect of a contradiction, a point noted by the editors of Philosophical Research,⁹⁸ Shu goes on to accuse Zhao of ambiguity regarding the idea of peaceful leap. Shu's complaint is that though Zhao is apparently convinced that there are two types of leap, either violent or not, defined in terms of the intention to overthrow state power, Zhao in fact talks as if they were all the same. But this, according to Shu, is not important at all, since they basically agree upon the state of things.

Just as Zhao has said, the relation between the internal unified line and the beneficial international situation in our country's transitional period, are the necessary conditions for the adoption of peaceful

methods to extinguish exploitation. And the requisite conditions for not using a gradual form of the leap to resolve the contradiction between our working class and capital are without foundation.⁹⁹

There are two points to note concerning this somewhat sanitized version of the logic of social conflict. The first is that following the typology of "On Contradiction," meant that Shu's and Zhao's understanding of the dialectic had little to do with its substantive content. The notion of interaction, of preservation and cancellation as simultaneous acts, was rejected in favor of the lock of contrary opposition: a situation of either/or. This was of course a supposition of state reason. For, a real conception of a dialectical process freed all forms of phenomena--from speech acts to direct political activity--from rigid constraint. Second, this was neither important nor a problem for either Shu or Zhao. Their concern was with maintenance, appropriation, and the peaceful suppression of potential discord. Their attempt was to try to anticipate the consequences of accepted categories; to analyze the meaning and possible significance of 'resistance' within a continuous revolutionary moment. And therefore to point out the problems of their thought is not to fault them for not having done better. For, to do this would be to demand that they could supersede their own system of philosophy. It is instead, simply to note that ideas are ill-served when they are leveled as instruments. Reason is poor when exhausted by the state.

Finally, it may be suggested that this was a somewhat unique discussion for this period. There was no invective, there were no charges that adopting a position betrayed the line; instead there was a mutual search for a truth. Perhaps this explains why the issue was not soon raised again.

The agreement among some of China's leading theorists, who differed otherwise, that national policy was somehow unique and not mimetic, may seem

rather odd. Indeed, given the almost complete adoption of Soviet organizational principles and methods, this declaration of independence might appear motivated more by pride than by a 'reflective' understanding. But though a feeling of fidelity to the state was undoubtedly there, this acted as a support, not a guide, for a set of postulates which were unified in their insistence upon difference. In turn, these axioms made manifest an arrogant conviction, rooted in and a product of dictatorial power, which did not merely separate the idea of essence from technique, but crucially, converted this essence into technique, into yet another instrument of power. The notion of a mediate relation, that in adaptation a dynamic occurs between a subject and its other, the possibility that change (development) was a consequence of mutual interaction was not simply unstated; it was not thought.

Now the discussion of China's contemporary political history with respect to the dichotomy between essence and technique has already been thoroughly analyzed and is certainly not served by repetition.¹⁰⁰ But it is, however, important to ground this episteme of power as it was revealed, and in turn as it shaped theoretical discourse. In this, it is necessary to stress that, philosophically speaking, the central, revolutionary work of Chinese dialectical materialism--"On Contradiction"--was undialectical. Mao had categorized the concept of the dialectic into a set table of polar opposition. To move beyond this in terms of theory--either to use undialectical categories dialectically, or to draw out a conception of the dialectic while paying homage to a hollowed out form--was almost impossible since it demanded a generic originality, or a secreted continuity with a previous (pre-revolutionary) understanding. But where the latter situation was possible, as it was certainly within the knowledge (even if as a relic) of China's most creative Marxist philosopher, Ai Siqi, no such effort occurred. Instead thought remained locked within hierarchical relations of power. Indeed, as was previously noted, theory encapsulated itself as technique.

Having little to draw upon--and one begins here to see the originality of Wang Xuewen--set within a fixed grid, where conceptual movement bounced endlessly off reified categories which themselves could not be (dialectically) superseded, but only either preserved or cancelled (cf., the discarding of the negation of the negation),¹⁰¹ it becomes clear how theorists could celebrate uniqueness as categorical opposition. How, that is, they could draft in periods from Soviet history for points of comparison or contrast, to serve as footnotes or textual support, at the same time that Soviet forms of centralized and decentralized structures of organization were being reproduced throughout the polity, from within the Party and throughout industry; and yet see everything as discontinuous, self-contained, and subject to one-sided and intended control. For, consciousness could only systematize phenomena in terms of fundamental binary propositions. The prejudice of this ideological understanding, in part, was that it serviced an ought.

It would appear then that theory in general, and philosophy in particular, could offer little in terms of substantive comment or original interpretation. The discursive edifice not only reinforced a subordinate definition of intellectual concern, but within this, cardinal principles vitiated their own (supposedly) attributable content. Moreover, the clear political consequences of identification with a position, the fact that, as the subsequent careers of Ai and Yang attest, there could be winners and losers in theoretical controversies among Party members, was not a great spur to forthright criticism or recommendation. Though it did take the aftermath of the "One Hundred Flowers Movement" to make this clear, it may also be noted that neither Ai nor Yang ever wrote again as to the direct meaning of the line. They argued instead on the content of consciousness and the dialectic.

Yet this is not to state that as a mode, theory was simply reactive; this would be misleading. Within categorical confinement there was a degree of conceptual freedom. Philosophers, economists (philosophers of the economy) did take on the critical questions concerning the character of the polity and the economy. And this

had collective meaning, in that theoretical constructs did influence the content of elite decisions. Mao's "Co-operativization Speech" of 1955, for example, which pushed the movement away from the Leninist emphasis upon mechanization, had its source, in part, in the anterior theoretical distancing from the Soviet experience which had been commonplace among Party intellectuals. What Mao initiated with "On Contradiction" was concretized conceptually by Party theorists, so that in turn, it had an impact upon his later, more definitive and practical enunciation of transitional independence. But, in this, the end-points, the axioms were always the same--unless of course they were simply abolished.

This created a noticeable similarity to many of the intellectual controversies in the Party before and after 1955. Theories, particularly those concerned with the political economy, basically divided along the same alternative assumptions, and, at best, refined the same pre-existing, generally recognized contradictions. Arguments were either about whether the condition of the productive forces within a given sector were in conformity with the relations of production, or whether they were lagging behind. Turned over, the argument could either be, that advanced productive relations were an aid to development, or that they were not. And here, an article by Yan Beiming concerning the question as to whether or not socialist relations had been introduced too soon into agricultural co-operatives--were the relations of production in advance or in conformity with the character of the productive forces--is most apposite, and deserves some comment. His analysis is particularly useful in that it serves as an account; it brings out quite clearly the contrasting positions over the set issue of necessity and the law of correspondence.

To put it briefly, Yan contends that the socialist co-operativization movement had occurred at precisely the right time, following from the law of conformity. The key he says is not to isolate the problem of the relationship between the productive forces and the relations of production simply in terms of agriculture; instead it is to understand the problem properly, with respect to the

relationship of agriculture to the overall economy. To do so, makes it clear that the backwardness of the agricultural productive system contradicts the developing needs of the socialist sector; it obstructs the requirements of the established socialist relations. Therefore new productive relations had to be introduced in order to liberate the productive forces. This has been and continues to be accomplished in the co-operativization movement.

We know that socialist industrialization cannot be split from agriculture and developed independently, just the same as the development of agriculture cannot be split from industrialization. To resolve the contradiction of agriculture lagging behind industry, thereby strengthening the alliance between agriculture and industry, it must be through agricultural co-operativization . . . with this kind of transformation of the relations, in a situation where tractors are not yet present, the productive forces will be able to obtain an even quicker development from that of land reform.¹⁰²

At the same time, Yan notes that there are two views opposed to this. The first is premised upon the idea that the key to any contradiction lies in its internal aspect--the external passes through the internal. Accordingly, the only question is whether or not there has been a qualitative development in the productive forces in agriculture, in this sphere alone, to warrant changes in the system of productive relations. And the advocates of this position argue that this has not occurred, and that new productive relations presuppose mechanization. 'Without tractor farms there are not the requisite conditions for socialist co-operativization'.

This Yan labels as revisionist, as that which focuses exclusively upon the productive forces, thereby ignoring the critical importance of the relations of production. And Yan quotes from "On Contradiction" to make the further point that there are times when in fact the relations of production may reverse its role as a determinant to become the determining element in the economic process. Thus, Yan concludes that those who argue a kind of 'tractor waitism' are really saying that "the people should not struggle to transform the old productive relations but should wait to be determined by the productive forces."¹⁰³

On the other side, Yan says that there are those who press for even more rapid changes in the system of productive relations as a means for spurring development. This he notes is based upon a misunderstanding of the concept of reversal in "On Contradiction," regarding the possible determining role for the relations of production. The point Yan says, somewhat disingenuously, is to understand that the relationship between the relations of production and the productive forces is interlocked; each aspect cannot exist independently. And in this, the movement of the productive relations is ultimately governed by the character of the productive forces. Moreover, Yan also points out, quite subtly, that the argument of those who want quicker change in the relations of production is somewhat analogous to that of the 'mechanists' in that both seemingly assume that the productive forces may be isolated and will somehow develop by themselves. To accept this means that people, "can discard effort, that it is not necessary to transform the relations of production by promoting the development of the productive forces."¹⁰⁴

In the end, Yan says that the line makes manifest the law of conformity, and is completely appropriate to the moment. The changed relations of production suit the developing needs of the national economy.

A view which attempted to justify its moment and did not see an essential contradiction on either one side or the other--where the productive forces or the productive relations were lagging behind--could not last. It ignored the constancy of political flux. Thus, Yan's argument was soon superseded by the Party's directive "On Strengthening Production Leadership and Organizational Construction of Agricultural Producer Co-Operatives," where it was stated that productivity was low and not yet satisfactory¹⁰⁵ (in passing, it may be noted that this point had been anticipated by Guan Mengjue, in his article "Concerning the Problem of the Relations of Production and the Forces of Production in the Higher Stage Agricultural Producers Co-Operatives").¹⁰⁶ But, in turn, this was itself soon

reversed by Mao in "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," where he stated that the relations of production were inadequate to the requirements of the productive forces. "Socialist relations of production have been established . . . but they are still far from perfect, and their imperfect aspects stand in contradiction to the development of the productive forces."¹⁰⁷

This either/or approach illustrates a discursive logic that substituted polar opposition for dialectical thought. And thus, in general there were only two sets of pictures which could be filled in. These in turn usually divided along a 'left-right' political axis¹⁰⁸--though this was not logically necessary; or, sometimes, according to divisions concerning pace. The difference between the "go slower" approach of the Eighth Party Congress, and Mao's repudiation of this in "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions" is illustrative of this latter point.

There were, of course, philosophic controversies concerning subjects other than the status of the productive relations. Shu, for example, continued to explore the conceptual meaning of contradiction. In 1956, for instance, in a rejoinder to Hu Sheng, Shu explained that contradiction involved both unity and antinomy within itself, and was not, as Hu seemed to understand, the synthesis of antagonisms: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.¹⁰⁹ Just as almost twenty years earlier, Ai had chastised Ye Qing over the latter's misunderstanding of the dialectic, so now Shu, though without the rancor, criticizes Hu for an equivalent failure. And this is not surprising, questions concerning the meaning of the dialectic were as common and relevant in this modern China, as were the continuous references (always pejorative) to Bernstein, Mach, etc.--to all those who fought with Lenin, or of whom he disapproved. This is because ultimately the issues facing these non-capitalist, underdeveloped economic formations, which were politically dictatorial, were basically the same.

Inevitably, the tension between orthodoxy and originality took on the aspect of creative encirclement, since the fundamental questions--how to classify and

organize the peasantry, forced or voluntary collectivization, whether industry should be emphasized in terms of light or heavy, or in terms of some balance between the two--the problems which a relatively economically deprived socialist state had to confront, defined and united China's present with the Soviet past. The differences between the two states concerning strategies, tactics, methods, and philosophies of approach were real and qualitative. But that should neither obscure nor gainsay those reference points of identity which survived the insistence upon uniqueness, and in this, circumscribed imaginative possibility. The telos of socialism, the intentions of Marxism prescribed, to a real degree, the dimensions of choice. In this conceptual sense, both China and the Soviet Union were, as states, the predicates of an intended subject. But of course each leadership was truly only subject to itself. And thus both states were characterized by chaotic and horrific attempts to short cut the developmental process; attempts which were as much the product of a declared goal, as they were of a political structure which sanctified leadership whim.

Notes

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- 3 Karl Marx, Grundrisse, trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Books, Middlesex, England, pp. 105-106.
- 4 Yang, "Guanyu Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo zai guodu shiqi de jichu yu shangceng jianzhu de wenti," p. 42.
- 5 Ibid., p. 48.
- 6 Ibid., p. 47.
- 7 Ibid., p. 50.
- 8 Yang Xianzhen, "Siwei dui cunzai de guanxi zhege zhexue shang zui genben de wenti ye shi women yiqie shiji gongzuo zhong zui genben de wenti" ("The relationship between thought and existence is the most fundamental problem in philosophy; and it also is the most fundamental problem in all our practical work"), Zhexue yanjiu, no. 2, 1955, p. 148.
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- 10 Yang, "Siwei dui cunzai de guanxi zhege zhexue shang zui genben de wenti ye shi women yiqie shiji gongzuo zhong zui genben de wenti," p. 147.
- 11 Yang, Gongchanzhuyi shijieguan yu zhuguan weixinzhuyi shijieguan de douzheng, p. 57.
- 12 Yang Xianzhen, "Bianzheng weiwuzhuyi de renshilun shi fanyinglun" ("Epistemology in dialectical materialism is a theory of reflection"), Renmin ribao, April 10, 1955.
- 13 Yang, "Siwei dui cunzai de guanxi zhege zhexue shang zui genben de wenti ye shi women yiqie shiji gongzuo zhong zui genben de wenti," p.150.
- 14 Yang Xianzhen, "Zenme xuexi Makesi de zhexue" ("How to study marxist philosophy"), Xuexi, no. 3, 1955, p. 6.
- 15 V. I. Lenin, "On Co-operation," in The Lenin Anthology, Robert C. Tucker (ed.), New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975, p. 708.
- 16 Moshe Lewin, Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates, London: Pluto Press, 1975, p. 95.

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- 17 Yang Xianzhen, "Lienin guanyu guodu shiqi de xueshuo" ("Lenin's theory of the state"), Renmin ribao, March 22, 1955, p. 2.
- 18 Ibid., p. 2.
- 19 Ibid., p. 2.
- 20 Ibid., p. 2.
- 21 Cf., Stephen F. Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution, New York: Vintage Books, 1975, esp. chapters 4-9.
- 22 Ai Siqi, "In Refutation of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's 'Composite Base Theory'" (People's Daily) translation, Selections from China Mainland Press, November 6, 1964, no. 3337, p. 6.
- 23 Ibid., p. 8.
- 24 Ibid., p. 10.
- 25 Yang, "Ganyu Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo zai guodu shiqi de jichu yu shangceng jianzhu de wenti," p. 50.
- 26 Ai, "In Refutation of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's 'Composite Bae Theory,'" p. 10.
- 27 J. Stalin, "Marxism and Linguistics," The Essential Stalin, Bruce Franklin (ed.), New York: Anchor Books, 1972, p. 411.
- 28 Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Letter from Engels to W. Borgius, Selected Correspondence, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982, p. 441.
- 29 J. Stalin, "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR," The Essential Stalin, Bruce Franklin (ed.), New York: Anchor Books, 1972, p. 449.
- 30 Ai Siqi, "In Refutation of Comrade Yang Hsien-chien's 'Composite Base Theory,'" p. 5.
- 31 Ibid., p. 9.
- 32 Ibid., p. 6.
- 33 Ai Siqi, "Xuexi Sidalin de xueshou wei zai woguo jianceng shehuizhuyi shehui" ("Study Stalin's theories in our fight to construct a socialist society"), Xuexi, 1954, no. 3, p. 3.
- 34 Ai Siqi, "In Refutation of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's 'Composite Base Theory,'" p. 7.
- 35 Ibid., p. 7.

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- 36 Ibid., p. 7.
- 37 Ibid., p. 11. This discussion evidently led Ai to publish as his self-criticism, "Renqing zichan jieji sixiang de fandongxing"; see n. 111, Chapter 3.
- 38 Ai Siqi, "In Refutation of Comrade Yang Hsien-chien's 'Composite Base Theory'" p. 10.
- 39 Ibid., p. 11. This simply reiterates that which he had said in his earlier self-criticism, "Renqing zichan jieji sixiang de fandongxing"; see Chapter 3, n. 111. But it does underscore his view that commitment to Marxism supposed a commitment to serious struggle.
- 40 Ibid., p. 12.
- 41 Ibid., p. 9.
- 42 Ai Siqi, "The road that our state construction follows is that of the gradual transition towards socialism, and this shares a basic unity with the road which the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet people went through. . . . In the Soviet Union at that time [the accession of Stalin, and the end of the NEP] the responsibility was not only to defeat the rebellious conduct of capitalists both inside and outside the country; moreover it was necessary to smash those reckless anti-Party elements inside the Party, those opposed to Marxism-Leninism, who conspired and talked preposterously of protecting the interest of the capitalist class, which does its utmost to obstruct the business of socialist construction." "Xuexi Sidalin de xueshou wei zai woguo jianceng shehuizhuyi shehui," p. 3.
- 43 Mao Zedong, "Speeches at the National Conference of the Communist Party of China," March 1955, Selected Works, vol. 5, Foreign Language Press, Beijing, 1977, p. 155.
- 44 Ai Siqi, "Xuexi sidalin de xueshou wei zai woguo jianceng shehuizhuyi shehui," p. 4.
- 45 Ibid., p. 4.
- 46 Ibid., p. 4.
- 47 Ibid., p. 4.
- 48 See Chapter 2, n. 48.
- 49 Ai Siqi, "Pipan Liang Shuming de zuexue sixiang--lugu de zhuguan weixinzhuyi he fengjian fuguzhuyi" ("Criticizing the philosophy of Liang Shuming--the undisguised subjective idealism and feudal doctrine of 'back to the ancients'"), Zuexue yanjiu, vol. 4, 1955, p. 8.
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- 51 Ibid., p. 250.
- 52 Ibid., p. 250.
- 53 Shen Zhiyuan, "Guanyu guojia zibenzhuyi jingji de xingzhi wenti" ("Concerning the character of the problems of the state capitalist economy"), Xian jianshe, 1953, no. 12, p. 1.
- 54 Mao Zedong, "On State Capitalism," Selected Works, Vol. 5, p. 101.
- 55 Shen, "Guanyu guojia zibenzhuyi jingji de xingzhi wenti," p. 1.
- 56 Qian Jiazhu, "Zai lun guojia zibenzhuyi" ("Again on the theory of state capitalism"), Xuexi, no. 8, 1954, p. 38.
- 57 Qian Jiazhu, "Zonghua Renmin Gongheguo xianfa cao'an yu shehui jingji zhidu" ("The draft constitution of the People's Republic of China and the socialist economic system"), Xian jianshe, no. 8, 1954, p. 18.
- 58 Shen, "Guanyu guojia zibenzhuyi jingji de xingzhi wenti," p. 4; Qian, "Zai lun guojia zibenzhuyi," p. 39.
- 59 Qian Jiazhu, "Lun guojia zibenzhuyi" ("On the theory of state capitalism"), Xin jianshe, 1954, no. 2, p. 16.
- 60 Qian, "Zhonghua Renmin gongheguo xianfa cao'an yu shehui jingji zhidu," p. 16.
- 61 Qian, "Zai lun guojia zibenzhuyi," p. 38.
- 62 Ibid., p. 39.
- 63 Shen, "Guanyu guojia zibenzhuyi jingji de xingzhi wenti," p. 4.
- 64 J. Stalin, "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR," pp. 445-446.
- 65 On the conservative tendency of Stalin's late thought, see Gustav A. Wetter, Dialectical Materialism, pp. 226-230.
- 66 Shen Zhiyuan, "Zong luxian yu shengchan guanxi yiding yao shihe shengchan li xingzhi de faze" ("The law of the general line that the relations of production must conform to the character of the productive forces"), Shanghai, 1954, p. 27; also printed in Xian jianshe, no. 4, 1954, pp. 11-18.
- 67 Ibid., p. 13.
- 68 Ibid., p. 18.
- 69 Ibid., p. 28.

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- 70 Wolfgang Bartke, Who's Who in the People's Republic of China, Amonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1981.
- 71 Wang Xuewen, "Quanyu woguo guodo shiqi de jingji faze wenti" ("Questions concerning the economic laws in our transition period"), Xuexi, no. 7, 1954, p. 35.
- 72 Ibid., p. 35.
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- 74 Ibid., p. 35.
- 75 Ibid., p. 36.
- 76 Ibid., p. 37.
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- 78 Wang, "Quanyu wogou shiqi de jingji faze," p. 37.
- 79 Richard Bernstein, "Cadre and Peasant Behavior Under Conditions of Insecurity and Deprivation: The Grain Supply Crisis of the Spring of 1955," in A. Doak Barnett, ed., Chinese Communist Politics in Action, Seattle: U. Washington Press, 1969, pp. 365-399.
- 80 Wang, "Quanyu woguo shiqi de jingji faze," p. 36.
- 81 Wang Xuewen, "Xianfa cao'an yu woguo shiqi de jingji" ("The draft constitution and our transitional economy"), Xian jianshe, no. 9, 1954, p. 10.
- 82 Wang, "Quanyu woguo guodu shiqi de jingji faze wenti," p. 36.
- 83 Ibid., p. 37.
- 84 Du Ruji, Yu Shudong, "Guanyu woguo guodu shiqi jingji xingzhi he jingji faze de jiige wenti" ("Several problems concerning the essence and laws of our country's transitional economy"), Xian jianshe, No. 12, p. 19.
- 85 Ibid., p. 20.
- 86 Ibid., p. 20.
- 87 Ibid., p. 20.
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- 90 Ibid., p. 23.
- 91 Shu Weikuang, "Zongguo guodu shiqi de jianjinxing feiyue" ("Concerning the gradual leap in China's transitional period"), Zhexue yanjiu, 1955, vol. 1, p. 98.
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- 93 Ibid., p. 97.
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- 96 Ibid., p. 151.
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- 98 Ibid., pp. 152-153.
- 99 Ibid., p. 153.
- 100 Stuart R. Schram, "Introduction: The Cultural Revolution in Historical Perspective," pp. 1-108.
- 101 Mao Zedong, "Talk on Questions of Philosophy," in Mao Tse-Tung Unrehearsed, Stuart R. Schram, ed., p. 226.
- 102 Yan Beiming, "Lun woguo shiqi shenchanli yu shengchanguanxi de bianzheng guanxi" ("On the dialectical relation between the productive forces and the relations of production in our transition period"), Xin jianshe, 1956, no. 5, p. 4.
- 103 Ibid., p. 7.
- 104 Ibid., p. 7.
- 105 "On Strengthening Production Leadership and Organizational Construction of Agricultural Producer Co-Operatives," in Communist China 1955-1959 Policy Documents with Analysis, Harvard East Asian Research Center, 1962, Cambridge, Mass., p. 247.
- 106 Guan Mengjue, "Guanyu gaoji nongyeschengchan hezuoshe de shengchanli yu shenchanguanxi wenti" ("Concerning the problem of the relations production and the forces of production in the higher-stage agricultural producers co-operatives"), Xia jianshe, 1956, no. 7.
- 107 Mao Zedong, "On the Correct Handling of the Contradictions Among the People," in Communist China 1955-1959, p. 280.

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- 108 Liu Shaoqi offered a clear definition of the relationship between 'rightism', 'leftism' and the course of economic development when he said, "in the last few years the tendency of deviating from the party's general line to the right has manifested itself mainly in being satisfied merely with what has been achieved in the bourgeois-democratic revolution, in wanting to call a halt to the revolution . . . in being unwilling to adopt a suitable policy to restrict capitalism to socialism, and in not believing that the Party could lead the people of the whole country to build socialism in China. The tendency of deviating from the Party's general line to the 'Left' has manifested itself mainly in demanding that socialism be achieved overnight . . . in not admitting that we should adopt measures for advancing, step by step, to socialism, and in not believing that we could attain the goal of socialist revolution by peaceful means." Liu Shaoqi, "Political Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China," September 15, 1956, given to the Eighth Party Congress in Communist China 1955-1959, p. 167.
- 109 Shu Weikuang, "Lun duili de tongyi ji maodun" ("A consideration that the unity of opposites is at once contradiction"), Xueshu yuekan, no. 6, 1957; Hu Guyuan, "Duili de tongyi shi bianzhengfa de hexin" ("The unity of opposites is the essence of contradiction"), Xueshu yuekan, no. 3, 1957; "Zai lun duili de tongyi shi bianzhengfa de hexin" ("Again on the theory that unity of opposites is the essence of dialectics"), Xueshu yuekan, no. 8, 1957.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: THE CHARACTER OF REASON

Within the continuum of revolutionary practice, the role of political theory might be contrasted between the periods before and after the seizure of power. The writings of Ai, for example, in the thirties, his original attempt to explain both the immediate and immanent significance of Marxism (the idea of theory in practice and a theory of praxis) in essays ranging from discussions of Hegel's dialectic to the war in Abyssinia, appear to differ sharply with those later works where concepts were, at times, so stupefyingly bound. The constriction of purpose, made manifest in the felt need to refashion an emphasis upon the virulence of class struggle within the superstructure to accord with a hierarchical assumption of secure state power, speaks not only of compromise and subservience, but also of distance, of intellectual separation from that time when Ai could simply and honestly point out the deficiencies in Mao's philosophical understanding.

Yet, this sense of division must not be exaggerated. For, it was the prior commitment to the Party, to the State, which informed thought. In this, interpretation began with the acceptance of parameters, of constriction of its movement. Political thought did not presume sacrifice or compromise, but declared itself to be of service, of legitimizing use from the start. Clearly, intellectual responsibility was, logically at least, to some degree self-defined, so that, as in the case of Wang Xuewen duty did not necessarily demand unreflective obedience. But political acceptance did suggest a need for temporal relevance; a desire (demand) to be 'appropriate'. And thus, the vicissitudes of thought expressed and were the expression of changes in the political line. This created an almost ephemeral quality to theoretical work, since a position previously argued would be forgotten, or self-denied, as soon as it was recognized that it was no longer politically apposite.

This is why theorists did not attempt to define the postulates governing their form of political association. For rules were Party rules, and were not subject either to discussion or reformulation. In a figurative sense, the position and function of thought corresponded to its essence: consciously it "reflected" the political line.

At the same time, it should be noted that this state had been declared in terms of a specific definition. From the start, meaning was understood (and was always to be understood) in relation to the set goals of socialism and communism. Political society was not 'open-ended', rather purpose was exclusive. In general terms the state resembled what Oakeshott has called a 'managerial state', where the condition of integration is decided through the attempt to realize a specific enterprise.¹ Within the framework then of teleological determination, Party thought in China could only be instrumental, could only be concerned with knowing how, instead of ever asking why. In a situation where knowledge was the adjunct of state intention, theory could, at best, only engage in thoughtful discussions over the means of process.

This, of course, stripped thought of its creative potential. It leveled the possibility of intellectual dialogue--of a dialectic--and, in the case of philosophy, turned reason into an index. The endless discussions of Hegel's dialectic, for example, remained fixed within the static attempt to understand meaning solely through the significance of Marxist reception. There was neither a concept, a category, nor the will to move outside this to try to see Hegel's, or any other philosophy, individually, in itself, as a possible source of knowledge. This could not be otherwise; since the premise of "un-acceptable" thinking required a recognition of value that was discursively denied by the supposed superiority of dialectical materialism. The epistemological break of dialectical materialism with all else did not merely isolate truth, in China, it defined truth through a somewhat arrogant separation. Historical investigations were, of course permissible. Chinese philosophers played their own classification game of the two-line struggle from Confucius onwards.² And there was the precedent of Lenin's slightly peculiar,

though certainly interesting fascination (flirtation) with Hegel. But labelling past thinkers is not equivalent to substantive understanding, and Lenin's interests remained personal--there were no Friends of Hegel Societies in China.

Restriction was not, however, a collective decision. The limits upon interpretation and the overall substantive determination of acceptable conduct--the complete identification of self and thought with the goals of the state--was neither postulated by nor the effect of common agreement. On the contrary, will was an élite conception, a designated attribute. This, of course, was central to the state's legitimizing supposition: that all events could be categorized and thereby managed. This, the argument of "On Contradiction," was made manifest in the serial process of domestic reorganizations which were periodically announced as new policies. And with the state conceived as its own subject, everything else became reduced to its predicate. Thus it was almost inevitable that, as with nature, people would come to be objectified as things, as other types of productive instruments to be used and developed. Mao's appalling "poor and blank" thesis was, that is, dictated as much by the logic of state reason, as it was the contemptuous expression of a particular thought.

The absorption of consciousness within the productive process does, at the same time, owe something to Marx. For Marx seemingly defines all aspects of social interaction and knowledge in terms of the system of production.³ The problem is that this rather strongly implies an identity between two different spheres, such that the supersession of an 'injurious' mode of production somehow guarantees the resolution of all antagonisms and 'false' ideologies. This is a basic confusion; and while Marx does posit a moment where there has been a qualitative change regarding control over the means of production, he leaves untouched almost all questions relating to the civic organization of socialist society. He makes no attempt to discuss the formal conditions of freedom: the problem of positive liberty within the collective.⁴ This simply is not an issue for him. At the very least, this

has created a vacuum which historically has been filled by vanguard groupings that have abjured all talk of personal freedoms in favor of self-interested declarations.

In this regard, the Chinese Communist Party may thus be said to have acted to type. And this, in passing, might be seen as the practical rejoinder to the young Ai's theory of praxis. For here, there would be nothing in the process of Sinification that would have been left out. On the contrary, despotic authority would be the exhaustive and justifiable form of distillation; would be the essence of adaptation. The truth of method would thus be the attempt to create a vast elemental, but productive, labor camp.⁵

The doctrines of cheap labor--the primitive visions of a community of self-sacrificers (a concept which even Marx abhorred)--found their ground in the political masterstrokes of sinification: "On Contradiction" and "On Practice." These were the philosophical works which localized the ideas of service and duty by setting out the a priori's of phenomenological experience and then directing labor toward their discovery. For it is clear that practice presupposed ideological guidance, that 'in-itself' it could never be the criterion of truth, since knowledge was mediated socially, and politically class determined. All labor could do was validate the correctness of a revolutionary position or attitude. And this it could do best by staying at home, by working the territory for the real varieties of contradiction. In short, by offering a use for the turn of the contingent into the necessary.

Thus the focus upon man, and the celebration of his subjective capabilities, must be understood as the necessary component of an ideology which defined itself through state reason. For ultimately all praxis was to be seen as the expression of one principle: that economic achievement could be, had to be, politically determined. This axiom was the ground of the ground of socialist power; the condition which structured Marxism as a national method.

But this in turn meant that the claim to a Marxist identity supposed a category, a convention which could absorb what were basically the voluntarist impulses of an élite and re-order them as constituent of basic principle. In other words, there had to be a concept or a philosophical trope of some kind which could integrate the criterion of economic development within the episteme of a particular political desire. Objective need required a subjective account. And this was the great value, what was provided for, by the laws of conformity and contradiction; which of course were not laws at all, but were merely inventions. Their insistence that there were times when the superstructure could in fact determine the course of the base, both preserved the fundamental principle as to the primacy of the base (since the reversal was qualified temporally), thereby extending a legitimizing orthodoxy, while it placed this binding injunction at the service of an élite will. The recognition of circumstance was a prerogative of the state.

And therefore what might appear as philosophically irreconcilable was in fact harmonized by the more direct requirements of political power. The seemingly impossible synthesis of a case of invariant laws, and the condition of their negation and transcendence through the will (what is socialism, if not in this sense a new 'lawless' state)⁶ disappears here as a problem, and becomes instead reinterpreted as the parameters to action; the bounds for encouragement. For, finally, these laws were to insure control as they provided direction; their neutrality guaranteed the specificity of restraint. But this could not simply be an external condition or relation. For, if economic growth was dependent upon human labor, if political commands supposed a reception in the collectivity of tireless effort, then this could only occur (politically, not logically) if these laws intervened directly and established themselves as the correct modes of thought. The proper functioning of the will assumed an imposed set of ideological assertions. And this, the imperative of construction, was what was to be brushstroked upon consciousness. The role of

Party philosophers, in turn, was to clarify and to refine what went in. This is how thought "reflected" existence.

The question of sinification was thus resolved through the creation of a methodology for craftwork; a dogma for action. In this, declarations remained uncontested. Since essence was accepted as a political definition, a philosophy of supposed disclosure: the dialectic, was moved continuously to preserve that which it could not conceive to question. At the same time, the basic hollowness to these categories has helped to sustain them in the effort toward political survival, though the meaning of circumstance has changed. "On Contradiction," and, particularly, "On Practice," for example, still filter claims to political legitimacy.⁷ This is to be expected since eventually almost all ideas fall to ground.

This constancy to location, this numbness to the categorical game, in turn raises a serious question concerning the possible rights of reason. A question which here must remain just that.

It is clear that in Mao's time, consciousness was structured according to the needs of the state. And therefore reason was based upon a denial of subjective freedom as a "right of man." The belief in the rational autonomy of man, the freedom to choose one's definition of felicity, could not be integrated with a system which absorbed the self within a declared teleological determination. This is obvious. And it should also make it clear why more contemporary administrative refinements, the democratization of organizations, should not be misread as something else. For these kinds of changes in the relations of production are still based upon manipulation; are merely techniques, approved by others, to increase productivity. They are not statements of independence.

Mao's legacy therefore continues to be of importance, because in explaining the meaning of the sinification of Marxism, he set out the rules of the game. This is what has been passed on. To change this would require a will (the source for which it is difficult to determine) to do away with the edifice once and for all. It

would, in one sense, be to bring back in effect what Mao discarded in theory: the negation of the negation.

Notes

- 1 Michael Oakeshott, On Human Conduct, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, pp. 185-326.
- 2 Cf., "Bu neng zai zhexue shi de yanjiu zhong qixiao Makessizhuyi de lingdao he danagxing yuanze" ("Marxist leadership and party principles cannot be abolished in researching the history of philosophy"), Guanming ribao, October 6, 1957, p. 6.
- 3 Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1972, pp. 25-63.
- 4 Albrecht Wellmar, "Reason, Utopia, and the Dialectic of Enlightenment," Praxis, no. 2, vol. 3, July 1983, pp. 83-103.
- 5 The metaphor of the workhouse is influenced by the work of the Frankfurt School on the dialectic of reason (the suppression of freedom in favor of technical control), and its relationship to Marx's project, and by the work of Habermas and Wellmar on the latent positivism in Marx's thought. Steven Lukes has also written on the problem of moral ends in Marxism. "[Marxism] has been unable to offer an adequate account of justice, rights, and the means-end problem, and thus an adequate response to injustice, violations of rights, and the resort to impermissible means, in the world we must live in." Steven Lukes, Marxism and Morality, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 141.
- 6 On the problem of objectification and free expression see Charles Taylor's discussion in Hegel, Chapter XX, "Hegel Today," particularly pp. 546-558; Charles Taylor, Hegel, see Chapter 3, n. 27.
- 7 For a discussion of the significance of "On Practice" in the post-Maoist era see Stuart R. Schram, "Ideology and Policy Since the Third Plenum, 1978-1983," Research Notes and Studies, no. 6, Contemporary China Institute, 1984.

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